

# **An Evaluation of the Celtic Hypothesis for Brythonic Celtic influence on Early English**

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## **Statement of original authorship**

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made.

Judith Margaret Owen

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Owen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed name.

7 November 2018

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## Abstract

The Celtic Hypothesis attributes some of the major linguistic changes in Old and Middle English to influence from the Brythonic languages that were spoken in Britain at the time of the Anglo-Saxon immigrations beginning in the fifth century. The hypothesis focuses on features of English that do not exist, or are not common, in the other Germanic languages but resemble features in the Celtic languages. From the evidence we have of the socio-political relationships between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons, the likely language contact situations are compatible with Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) 'substratum interference' and van Coetsem's (1988) 'imposition', by which morpho-syntactic features are transferred from one language (L1) to another (L2) through imperfect second-language acquisition. The fact that the social situation was compatible with Brythonic influence on English does not mean, however, that the linguistic features in early English claimed by the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis as showing Brythonic influence were actually influenced in this way. My purpose is to evaluate the Celtic Hypothesis in the light of the evidence and modern theories of language change due to contact.

This thesis focuses on three features that have played a prominent role in the Celtic Hypothesis: (1) the dual paradigm of *be* (*bēon* and *wesan*) in Old English, (2) the periphrastic construction *do* + infinitive and (3) the periphrastic progressive construction *be* + *-ing*, the last two of which began to be grammaticalised in Middle English. I collect independent evidence from a selection of Middle Welsh texts of the parallel constructions: (1) the dual paradigm of *bot* 'be', (2) the periphrastic construction *gwneuthur* 'do' + verbal noun and (3) the periphrastic construction *bot* 'be' + particle + verbal noun. While the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis provide examples of these constructions from several Brythonic languages including Middle Welsh, they give few examples and do not discuss the variability of the evidence according to date, region or genre. My own research confirms that the dual paradigms of *be* and *bot* do form a close parallel, but it also shows that the Old English dual paradigm is unlikely to have arisen due to Brythonic influence. My findings also show that evidence for the construction of *gwneuthur* 'do' + verbal noun is problematic: while it is very common in Middle Welsh prose narratives, it is very rare in the early prose annals and the earliest poems. Evidence for the progressive construction in early Welsh is similarly problematic: while it is regularly used in Colloquial Modern Welsh as *bod* 'be' + particle + verbal noun, it is by no means common in Middle Welsh. By looking at a wider range of Middle Welsh evidence, I demonstrate the limitations of the evidence relied on by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis. This may lead to better substantiated arguments for the hypothesis in the future.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

My research aims to evaluate what is known as the Celtic Hypothesis as it relates to certain specific linguistic features. This hypothesis attributes some of the major changes in the early stages of the English language to the influence of the Brythonic languages it came in contact with. I evaluate the hypothesis in the light both of the evidence the proponents of this theory provide to support their theories and evidence I gather from examination of early texts. Since the linguistic changes discussed in the thesis are generally agreed on as having occurred in early English, I look at what linguistic evidence from the Brythonic languages can be found to compare with the English evidence.

The literature shows that there are linguistic features within the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis of early English that are thought by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis to have been influenced by contact with Brythonic. Although as many as fifty-two linguistic features in English have been identified as possibly resulting from contact with Brythonic (White 2002: 169-70), less than half of them are regularly discussed as viable possibilities. From them I focus on three linguistic features to establish what evidence they supply. First, I look at the double paradigm of the verb *be*. The second area I look at is the rise of periphrastic *do*. Thirdly, I investigate the progressive aspect in English and its relationship to the Brythonic Celtic use of ‘be’ and the verbal noun. My aim as a whole is to reanalyse these areas to see whether the evidence is sufficient to determine whether Brythonic Celtic was an influence in the early English language.

In this chapter, I discuss the significance of my research, and give an overview of the Brythonic languages and my methodology. In the following chapter, I outline the language contact theories I take as my model.

### Significance of the research

Winford (2007) outlines the development of language contact theory from its early, uncoordinated stages to its more unified and explanatory, although not yet ideal, state with a focus on van Coetsem (1988, 1995, 2000). He outlines the problems that can occur without a fully integrated and coherent framework. A lack of balance can be seen in the theory, where there has been a swing from the assumption that language change is predominately caused for language-internal reasons — an assumption held by linguists of the nineteenth century (Robins 1967: 173) and continued into the twentieth century — to an assumption that language change is predominantly caused due to language contact; in other words, that it takes an external reason to affect language inertia (Crisma 2011, Keenan 2002). With the upsurge of proponents for the Celtic Hypothesis, Hickey (1995: 88-91) warns of the naïve over-generalisation of attributing all language change to language contact and says (2012: 506): ‘The insights it [the Celtic Hypothesis] offers can be fruitful for research within



mainstream English tradition and, combined with language-internal motivation for change, can contribute to mature and balanced scholarship without preconceptions about how such change was triggered and continued through time.’ Although there are some linguists who deny that Brythonic Celtic had any influence on English and others still ignore the issue completely, there are some who believe so wholeheartedly in it that their arguments and conclusions appear to go beyond what can be substantiated by the evidence and appear to suggest that all changes in early English were due to contact with Brythonic Celtic. For instance, some of White’s (2002) fifty-two instances of supposed Brythonic influence on English appear to be based on nothing more than a superficial similarity between the languages. Vennemann makes the excellent point that linguistic features shared by Insular Celtic and English need not necessarily be the result of language contact and says it is important to establish how English could have developed without contact with Celtic (2002b: 295). A balanced analysis for the Celtic Hypothesis and language contact theory would also include a greater awareness of the possibility of convergence; in other words, that a change might also occur because of a combination of internal and external factors (Dorian 1993, Hickey 2010: 15-6). Hickey’s advice and Winford’s warnings will guide my analysis of the theories proposed for the Celtic Hypothesis and my independent research in order to clarify the issues accurately.

For these reasons an objective analysis is necessary to clarify the extent to which the evidence can plausibly be interpreted as supporting Brythonic influence on certain aspects of the English language. Further investigation of the evidence from Brythonic Celtic is essential, since it has tended not to be as detailed as the investigation of the evidence from early English. Arguments concerning the regions in which the first influences may have occurred appear to be *ad hoc*. Dating of the evidence is often ignored, and one or two examples of a linguistic feature is often considered to be adequate to prove a pattern. Although evidence from the very earliest stages of Brythonic is limited, there is nonetheless still more work that can be done with the evidence that exists.

Because I wish to test the strength of the evidence that has been presented in support of the Celtic Hypothesis, I conduct an in-depth analysis of the theories and evidence for the linguistic features. It is for this reason I do not investigate a broad range of features, taking two features of English that have been researched in great detail, and one that has been researched in much less detail. I have chosen the English periphrastic construction with auxiliary *do* and infinitive, because it is perhaps the feature most discussed by the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, who consider it highly likely to show Brythonic influence. I have chosen the Progressive construction of *be* with *-ing* for similar reasons. In contrast with these features, the Old English present tense dual paradigm of ‘be’, although similarly considered likely to show Brythonic influence, is rarely discussed in detail; not only does it serve as a balance against the other two features in terms of the quantity and quality of the arguments in support of Brythonic influence, but also in terms of its being an early feature that was lost in Middle English in contrast with the other two features that arose only in Middle English and have been retained to the present day. I initially intended to include the loss in English of the dative case to express inalienable possession (external possession), but decided against it for

two reasons. Firstly, including a fourth linguistic feature would reduce the depth of my analysis for each feature because of the word limit. Secondly, the absence of the feature in the Celtic languages means that, while detailed analysis of the English evidence and the linguistic theories would be advantageous, further analysis of the Brythonic evidence would not, and it is analysis of the Brythonic evidence that lies at the heart of my evaluation of the Celtic Hypothesis.

The three features chosen will be dealt with in separate chapters, in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, and I summarise these here. Chapter 2 discusses developments in the theory of language change in contact situations that have created the context in which the Celtic Hypothesis can be taken seriously. Chapter 6 provides a brief conclusion. Two appendices supply further context for the thesis.

Chapter 3: The similarity between the dual paradigm of *be* in Old English and the dual paradigm of Welsh *bod* ‘be’ was one of the first features to be argued (Keller 1925, Tolkien 1963), and this gave impetus to the concept that Brythonic Celtic may have had more influence on the English language than had previously been supposed. For this reason, I investigate this issue first. The fact that stems of both paradigms are inherited Indo-European ones may indicate that this development in English is an instance of the convergence mentioned by Hickey (2010), whereby tendencies in English may have aided influence from other languages in a contact situation to take effect.

Chapter 4: The similarity between the English use of periphrastic *do* and the Welsh use of periphrastic *gwneuthur* ‘do’ has been much discussed, but scholars’ conclusions are inconsistent with each other and sometimes inconsistent with the evidence. Since this is such a popular topic, it will be advantageous to investigate it more systematically and with greater attention to the evidence, particularly that of Middle Welsh.

Chapter 5: In Modern English the form of the progressive aspect using *be* + *-ing* is strikingly similar to construction in Welsh using *bod* ‘be’ with the particle *yn* and a verbal noun, and so it is readily assumed that Brythonic has influenced English in this regard. It will be important to trace the process by which the English gerund and the participle have interacted in the past, since they have converged into the same form ending with *-ing*, and it is unclear whether the English progressive construction arose out of either of them.

I evaluate the claims for each of these three linguistic features in order to establish which claims are more plausible and which more speculative in relation to the evidence available. In other words, this is an in-depth study of the claims, rather than simply a review of them, since preliminary investigation suggests that some of the claims are based on slender evidence. It is a significant aspect of my research that I undertake an independent analysis of the evidence, in particular the evidence from the Welsh language, rather than simply relying on the evidence provided by scholars as they argue their hypotheses. By focusing on this selection of possible areas of influence on the early English language by Brythonic Celtic, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of some of the issues involved in positing Brythonic

influence on English. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the evidence available for the study and my methodology.

## **The Brythonic languages**

Celtic is an Indo-European language that was at one time spoken throughout much of western and central Europe, including the British Isles. The Celtic languages spoken in the British Isles can be divided linguistically into Goidelic (Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx) and Brythonic.

Brythonic or British separated into the northern languages of Cumbric and possibly Pictish, about which very little is known, and the southern languages of Welsh, Cornish and Breton between the middle of the fifth century and the end of the sixth. The clearest changes between the early, common Brythonic language and the developing Welsh, Cornish and Breton languages are the loss of case endings and syncope of vowels (Jackson 1953: 690-91). Welsh began separating from Cornish and Breton from around the sixth century (Russell 1995). Primitive or Archaic Welsh dates from its separation from Brythonic until roughly 800, and Old Welsh dates from roughly 800 to 1150 (D. S. Evans 1964: xvi). Middle Welsh runs roughly from 1150 to 1400, coinciding with the start of Norman influence and the end of cultural isolation, and it can be divided into early Middle Welsh (1150–1250) and late Middle Welsh (1250–1400) to reflect changes in orthography, morphology and syntax (D. S. Evans 1964: xvii-xix). Old Cornish dates until the end of the twelfth century, Middle Cornish from then until the seventeenth century, and Late Cornish lasts until the eighteenth century when it dies out (A. R. Thomas 1992a: 346). Old Breton runs from the fifth to the eleventh centuries, Middle Breton from the eleventh to the mid-seventeenth centuries and Modern Breton from then onwards (Hemon 1975: 1).

The process of division into the separate Brythonic languages coincided with the period of the early contact in some parts of the country with Old English (D. S. Evans 1964: xvi), and the developments of the individual Brythonic languages were partly affected by the status and spread of the languages and their speakers in relation to other communities and their languages. Until the late fifth century and the early sixth century, Brythonic had been fairly uniform, but the Saxon incursions westward eventually broke the land link between Wales and the Brythonic areas to the north and south of it (A. R. Thomas 1992b: 251-2). It was during the Middle Welsh period that the separation arose between the rural Welsh-speaking communities of Wales and its urban communities, which were typically non-Welsh speaking (A. R. Thomas 1992b: 252). Although Welsh was still used for high-status activities such as administration and government until 1288 on the fall of Llywelyn, the last Welsh prince of Wales, the Welsh aristocracy was gradually becoming anglicised, and this was intensified first on the ascension to the English throne of the first of the Welsh Tudors, Henry VII, in 1485 and then by the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542 (A. R. Thomas 1992b: 252).

The history of the Cornish language initially followed a similar path to that of Welsh. Until the medieval period, Cornwall was regarded as a country socially and politically separate from England, and the Cornish language was widely spoken, not only by the general populace, but also by the clergy and the aristocracy (P. B. Ellis 1974: 32-4, 58-9, Mills 2010: 189, 94). After the Norman invasion, Breton allies of William I were given positions of power in Cornwall (Mills 2010: 189-206), and this may have helped to extend the prestige of the Cornish language. Like the Welsh and the Bretons, the Cornish had hoped the ascension of Henry Tudor to the English throne would benefit their cultural and political standing, but it had the opposite effect of inducing some of the Cornish leaders to become anglicised (P. B. Ellis 1974: 52-3). Others of the Cornish aristocracy, however, became disaffected by the anglicising movement and joined in the popular rebellions against England (Hayden 2012), which arose partly for economic reasons and partly for religious reasons as a result of the Reformation that began in England in 1533 (Beer 1982: 38-81). While the Reformation was supposed to bring religion to people in their own language and provisions were made for translation of the Bible into Welsh, there were none for the Cornish language. This meant that the Cornish were expected to use the English Bible and prayer book and attend Anglican services held in the English language instead of the Latin, to which, as predominantly Roman Catholics, they were accustomed. As the Cornish rebels stated in their set of 9 Articles and later in their 16 Articles of demands, some of them did not speak English (Beer 1982: 64-6, Rose-Troup 1913: 218-29). Many saw it as an affront to the Cornish culture and language to have English forced on them, and rebellions arose at various times in Cornwall and Devon during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Hayden 2012). Since the English were able to repress the rebellions, the Cornish language was put under even more pressure and it died out in the eighteenth century.

Breton began to develop away from the rest of the southern Brythonic language of Cornish as the Bretons emigrated from Britain to the Armorican peninsula between the fifth and seventh centuries (Ternes 1992: 371). Whether or not the initial cause of this emigration was the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons is disputed. Ellis (1974: 16) claims, on the basis of archaeological evidence, that it is as likely that people emigrated from Devon and Cornwall to Brittany because of Irish incursions as it is because of those of the Anglo-Saxons; Thomas (1973: 5-13) discusses two areas of Irish settlement in Cornwall and Devon in the fifth and sixth centuries, but he warns that archaeological evidence of the emigration to Brittany is problematic. It is generally assumed that the emigrants originated from the south west of Britain, but it is also possible that Britons throughout the southern part of Britain formed part of the migrants, since it is possible there were no significant differences between the varieties of the Brythonic language spoken throughout the south of Britain at that time. Emigration leaving from Cornwall could be expected regardless of their origins, both because flight would be westward away from the eastern invasion and because Cornwall was one of the main points of contact between Britain and the continent. However, the close linguistic links between Cornish and Breton are not only because of the migration to Brittany. There were also several instances in which Bretons moved to Cornwall in significant numbers: not only when William of Normandy brought high-ranking Bretons with him as allies and subsequently bestowed land in Cornwall on them (Mills 2010: 189-206), but also Cornwall

became a destination for lower-class Bretons seeking employment according to Ellis (1974: 30). However, the social ties between Cornwall and Brittany were weakened after the Reformation in England and the loss of Breton independence to France in 1532 (P. B. Ellis 1974: 66, Ternes 1992: 372). After the Tudor period began in England, and the ties between Brittany and Cornwall began to weaken, other social factors, too, influenced the development of Breton that the other Brythonic languages did not face. The process of Brittany's annexation by France began in 1488 with the Breton defeat in battle at St Aubin du Cormier (P. B. Ellis 1974: 52). Even by the tenth century the 'politically and culturally leading classes' had begun to speak French rather than Breton (Ternes 1992: 173). Their literature from this period and beyond shows a strong French influence (Ternes 1992: 373-4), although nineteenth and twentieth century writers have tended to avoid French words and terms (Hemon 1975: 2). For this reason, Modern Breton and late Middle Breton may not provide representative evidence of the early Brythonic language across all linguistic systems.

Because the native speakers of early English and early Brythonic languages are long dead, the linguistic evidence for these languages must be derived from written sources. I investigate evidence of these languages partly through the study of grammars of the languages, but mostly through examining primary texts, and I give a brief description of written texts that may supply this evidence. One crucial consideration is the timeframe within which linguistic changes in early English could possibly be attributed to contact with Brythonic. Opinions regarding this vary in the works by Celtic Hypothesis proponents, and this affects their arguments for what influences there may have been from Brythonic. 'Chronological priority' is one of the criteria set out by Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 250-2). The significance of the timeframe of such language influence must be kept in mind when the date of the linguistic evidence is considered, particularly for those texts whose original composition and/or subsequent copying are not unambiguously datable. It is also important to bear in mind that there may be a delay between when linguistic changes occur in the spoken language and when these changes can be found in the written language, and there has to be a sufficient degree of priority in the one language to allow for the 'delayed contact effects' to show in the other language (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 253, Hickey 1995: 90-1). This delay is a crucial part of the Celtic Hypothesis in explaining why Brythonic influence does not appear to have occurred in Old English written texts, but, they argue, must have been occurring in the spoken language during the Old English period for the effects to be seen in Middle English writings.

The Brythonic languages are divided into several stages as they developed further and further from their common Brythonic stage. In general, the later the stage, the more written material is available for analysis of the grammar. I do not analyse the northern Brythonic languages, since they are only attested early. The Cumbric language, dating from the seventh to the tenth centuries, was most closely related to Old Welsh, but provides little linguistic evidence due to lack of extant texts, although Jackson (1969: ix) believes that the language of the early Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* is Cumbric from the lowlands of Scotland, an idea that is not generally accepted. Pictish, if indeed it is a Brythonic language, and the early language of the Isle of Man have no texts of value for syntactic analysis. For further information about the early

texts in the Brythonic languages and the manuscripts they are contained in, please see the appendix on Brythonic texts and manuscripts.

## Methodology

My methodology falls into three categories. I review the literature on language contact theories in general and, more specifically, on the interaction between the Celtic languages and Germanic, with a focus on Brythonic and early English, in order to evaluate the possible scenarios for Brythonic influence according to the recent contact theories. I investigate evidence of the early stages of Brythonic and early English, partly through the study of grammars of the languages, but mostly through examining Middle Welsh texts. I then evaluate the theories for and against the Celtic Hypothesis in the light of the evidence.

The first of these three categories provides the theoretical framework by which to determine the validity of claims about types of possible outcomes from the contact between Brythonic Celtic and early English. Language contact theories have developed significantly since the 1980s and have become more comprehensive and explanatory as a result of the understanding that contact-induced language change is not a simple matter of the superstrate influencing the substrate as was previously considered. Thomason and Kaufman (1988) explain that differences in the rate at which a language is learnt will affect the effect of the contact on both languages. This theory becomes even more powerful when taken in conjunction with van Coetsem's explanation that the various outcomes from the language contact are determined by the interaction of who the agent of the transfer is and what he calls the stability gradient of language (1988).

The second category is an independent analysis of the evidence rather than simply relying on the evidence provided by scholars as they argue their hypotheses. Middle Welsh provides a wide range of texts (Russell 1995: 113). The prose texts I analyse are *Brut y Tywysogyon*, *Pwyll Penduic Dyuet* from the *Mabinogion* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*, a tale associated with the *Mabinogion*. Of the early poetic texts, I look at a selection from *The Book of Taliesin*, *The Book of Aneirin* containing *Y Gododdin*, and *Y Cynfeirdd* ('The early poets'). Most of my analysis of Brythonic linguistic features involves evidence from these texts, since they are available in published editions and are among the texts cited by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis as evidence supporting their arguments. From *Culhwch ac Olwen*, I have selected four sections to analyse in depth, one from the beginning, two passages in the middle and one running to the end of the tale. Specifically, the lines are: 1–200, 374–600, 751–952 and 1057–1246 of the edition by Bromwich and Evans (1988). With the main passages I selected from *Pwyll Penduic Dyuet* (lines 1–100, 201–300, 401–500, 601–654, giving a total of 354 lines) edited by Thomson (1957), I confirmed my findings from *Culhwch ac Olwen* and I provide examples from it where relevant. For some linguistic features, I have analysed the whole of *Pwyll Penduic Dyuet* (654 lines). The version of *Brut y Tywysogyon* I read is from the *Red Book of Hergest* in the edition of Thomas Jones (1955) and I analysed the entries for

the years from 680–682 to 1100–1102.<sup>1</sup> *Armes Prydein*, a prophetic poem edited by Ifor Williams (1964), which I read through without analysing in depth, provides a counterpoint to the two prose narrative tales from the *Mabinogion* and the prose chronicle in being set in the future: the verbs are predominantly in the future tense in contrast with the typically past tense of the tales and the chronicle. I read parts of *Y Gododdin* in the edition of Ifor Williams (1938) and selected examples from it. I also analysed 1,380 lines of short poems, comprising 431 lines of the twelve Taliesin praise poems identified as authentic by Ifor Williams in his edition translated by Caerwyn Williams (1968), 131 lines of five anonymous poems from Parry's (1962) selection: *Moliant Dinbych Penfro*, *Stafell Gynddylan*, *Eryn Pengwern*, *Tristwch yn y Gwanwyn* and *Y Gaeaf*, and the 818 lines of Jacobs's (2012) edition of early gnomic and nature poetry. By reading and analysing a selection of Middle Welsh texts, I established my own database with which to evaluate the evidence provided in support of the Celtic Hypothesis.

As the third part of this methodology, I evaluate the plausibility of the claims for each of the three linguistic features I have selected that may show a Brythonic influence on early English in order to establish which claims are more plausible and which more speculative in relation to the evidence available. In other words, this will be an in-depth study of the evidence, since some of the claims made by the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis are based on evidence that is more problematic than is sometimes made out to be.

To evaluate the arguments and evidence provided by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis for the three linguistic features I focus on, I compare what evidence they provide with my own and evaluate their theories against the theories of language change in contact situations, which I outline in the following chapter. Some of the issues that need to be accounted for are: whether the evidence put forward is actually representative of the languages at the appropriate stages; whether the relative dating of the examples of the linguistic features in the languages is appropriate in the light of language contact theories; whether the theories put forward to advance the Celtic Hypothesis are compatible with the theories of language contact; and whether there are problems in any of these areas because of lack of evidence or difficulties the interpretation of the evidence. Timing is clearly crucial, but timing may not be easily established, nor is it obvious what timing is reasonable to allow between contact and potential change. Since there are many issues to integrate and many potential gaps in evidence and theory, it may not be possible to reach firm conclusions in evaluating the arguments used in promoting the Celtic Hypothesis. All I can hope to achieve is to bring more evidence into the evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> The first of the pairs of dates is the year given in the manuscript; the second is the actual year as determined from historical context (T. Jones 1955: lvi).

## Chapter 2: The rise of the Celtic Hypothesis

### Introduction: Why now?

In this chapter I outline theories of language change in contact situations that form the background to the Celtic Hypothesis. The important point to establish is whether, as the Brythonic Celtic speakers acquired the target language of early English, there was any opportunity for large-scale influence on the English language.

Until recently, the idea that early English might have been influenced by Brythonic to any significant degree would not have seemed plausible for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it was believed that the Britons living in the south and east of Britain had been killed or had fled to the West. In his *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* written in the sixth century, Gildas provides literary evidence of the wholesale slaughter of the Britons in the English-held areas. Other early texts such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (beginning in the ninth century) and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (written around 731) appear to support Gildas. Bede, for instance, describes a 'great slaughter' of the Britons at the Battle of Chester (2.2). The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recounts the slaughter of 4000 Britons and the flight of the rest from Kent in 457 CE, the slaughter of twelve British leaders in 465, the flight of Britons from another battle in 473, and further slaughter and flight in 477. These early works were unanimous in indicating that the British Celts were killed by or fled from the invading Germanic tribes.

Furthermore, on the linguistic side, the lack of Brythonic loan words in English in contrast with those of Scandinavian and Norman French languages seemed to confirm the written accounts. What little borrowing from Brythonic into English there was tended to be words connected to geographical features such as Modern English *coombe*, *glen*, *Avon*, *Dover* and other river and place names; such restricted lexical borrowing is familiar to us in Australia with words such as *billabong* taken from an Aboriginal language. As Hickey (2010: 8) notes, until the mechanisms of language contact had been more fully explored, there was a general assumption that the more prestigious language could influence the less prestigious, but not vice versa. Even where some similarities in morphology and syntax were noted, the late appearance of such similarities appeared to rule out the possibility of any significant Brythonic influence on English.

In time, these objections to the Celtic Hypothesis were countered through better knowledge and understanding both of language contact mechanisms and of the probable scenario of the contact between the speakers of Brythonic Celtic and those of early English. A major change in understanding the demographic impact caused by the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons arose in the 1950s and 1960s with archaeological evidence suggesting that the Celts were not in fact all slaughtered or pushed to the west. Since then there has been extensive archaeological



work to support this, and now genetic studies are adding their part to this understanding. The appendix on the contact situation in Britain from the mid-fifth century discusses evidence from historical records, archaeology, genetics and linguistics that shows that Celts and Anglo-Saxons co-existed within Britain. Together, this evidence shows that the Celts were not all wiped out or displaced from lands taken over by the Anglo-Saxons. So, despite the accounts by Gildas and others, there appear good reasons for accepting that there was an opportunity for long-term language contact between Brythonic Celtic and early English. The discrepancy between Gildas's account and the archaeological evidence is not so much that he writes a century or more after the event, but that he, like Bede after him, writes with a biased religious agenda that is furthered by his exaggeration of the subjection and degradation of the British tribes (A. Williams 1999: 1-2). The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, too, cannot be taken at face value, since it was to the political advantage of the House of Wessex that commissioned it to have the conflict emphasized; it had more to do with ninth-century politics than the history of the Anglo-Saxon migrations (A. Williams 1999: 2). The evidence from archaeology and genetics should, therefore, be accepted as a fairer assessment of the events of the time. Taking the archaeological, genetic, religious, dynastic and linguistic evidence as a whole, there appears to have been substantial contact between the British and the Anglo-Saxon peoples; rather than segregation according to ancestry, there appears to have been a complex, multi-tiered society within England.

The linguistic situation in England was similarly complex during the first few centuries after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, with different combinations of monolingual, bilingual and multilingual speech communities interacting in a range of different languages at different levels of prestige or register. For practical purposes, I focus only on the Brythonic and English languages, but it is important to remember that there may have been other linguistic influences at work both on the varieties of Brythonic spoken in England as well as the more familiar influences on early varieties of English from other languages such as Old Norse. At the time of the Anglo-Saxon migrations to Britain, Latin had been used as an official language throughout the Roman-held areas of Britain for several centuries and there is evidence that some Brythonic speakers were able to speak and write in Latin, although the extent to which and the regions in which Britons became monolingual in Latin cannot be determined. It is also possible that the relative status between English and Brythonic varied across regions and at different periods. It is clearly an advantage to analyse the complex language situation within England at this early period according to speech communities of different sizes and status, rather than seeing the languages only as national monoliths. This complex socio-linguistic situation makes interaction between the languages the British and the Anglo-Saxons spoke a possibility. Without this possibility, there would have been little likelihood that the Celtic Hypothesis could be valid in any respect. However, by itself, this possibility does not show that any substantial impact of the Brythonic languages on early English did actually occur as the Celtic Hypothesis claims. To evaluate the possibility or the likelihood of there being any influence from Brythonic, it is necessary to set out the theories of language change arising from contact situations and to apply them to the situation in Anglo-Saxon England.

Like the advances in demographic research, understanding of the outcomes of language contact also changed significantly around the 1950s. For instance, although Tolkien was not the first to argue for Celtic influence on early English, his 1955 O'Donnell lecture, and its later publication (1963), was a watershed in the acknowledgement by Anglo-Saxonists of the possibility of Celtic influence on English. Since then, linguistic understanding of the mechanics involved in language contact have advanced significantly. Hickey (2010) provides an important literature review on language contact mechanisms and outcomes; differences between gradual versus rapid second language learning at a societal level can provide general explanations for the changes found in English that may have arisen due to long-term contact with Brythonic Celtic (Hickey 2010: 8, 10, 21). The main objections to the specific claim that Brythonic could have influenced early English can also now be addressed satisfactorily. The obstacle that English borrowed few Celtic lexical items is tempered by Breeze's series of articles over a twenty-year period demonstrating that there were more Brythonic lexical items in early English than are still in use in Modern English. More significantly, van Coetsem (1988, 1995, 2000) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988) demonstrate that the rapid language learning would result in few lexical items being transferred into the language, with the influence on other areas of the language being far more extensive. It is also better understood why there may be a substantial delay between a period of language contact and the first evidence of it in writing. Previously, the new syntactic features, such as *do*-periphrasis, that appeared suddenly in Middle English writing were usually considered to be the result of internal developments or of contact with other languages during the Middle English period. The idea that Brythonic influence could be behind such developments appeared incompatible with the dates of the written evidence. Recently, however, it is understood that there can be a delay of even several centuries after the initial language contact before any influence is found in writing, and most proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, for instance Vennemann (2002a) and Tristram (2004), rely on this understanding.

Although the possibility for significant language contact between Brythonic and early English was gradually becoming better understood, for nearly a century from the early discussions by Keller (1925) and Preusler (1938) of possible influence on early English by Brythonic, the possibility remained on the fringes of linguistic theory. The Celtic Hypothesis has only recently become a mainstream, although by no means universally accepted, theory. For example, the Celtic Hypothesis has recently been included in the argument of at least one generative linguist (Crisma 2011). With the formalisation of the mechanisms of language influence, it may be that generative linguistics, which has been the dominant syntactic theory for some time, can now begin to pay more attention to language contact as a triggering mechanism for language change.

## Language contact theories

### *Early language contact theories*

Before considering recent theories of language contact, it may be helpful to look at earlier theories to understand why it is only recently that the Celtic Hypothesis has been able to develop. Early studies of language change, predominantly those of the immediate predecessors of the Neogrammarians, tended to focus on language change as the language-internal development, or even ‘degeneration’, of an earlier stage of the language (Robins 1967: 170-84). Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Neogrammarians put linguistics on a scientific footing and expanded the study of dialectology, including the study of borrowing and change by analogy (Robins 1967: 182-91).

In the first half of the twentieth century linguists took more account of language contact but, on the whole, did not understand the complicated nature of linguistic influence in a contact situation and generally assumed that lack of lexical borrowing indicated lack of other influence. Whereas the socio-political relationship between substratum and superstratum languages had long been understood, it was still generally assumed that borrowing by a high-prestige language from a low-prestige or substratum language was less common than the reverse, unless the loan word referred to a new concept or item, for instance *aardvark* (Anttila 1972: 154-5), and that the high-prestige language would otherwise not be influenced by contact with a low-prestige language. Predominantly, linguists still focused on language-internal explanations for similarities and differences between languages and their dialects. In response to, and in criticism of, these theories, the importance of geographical factors, such as proximity between dialects and variety within speech communities, was later stressed (Robins 1967: 187-91), based on ideas that developed out of the earlier *Wellentheorie* (Robins 1967: 179).

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that the social aspect of language change came to be better understood, when linguists such as Weinreich (1953) and Labov (1963) demonstrated that speech variations within a language occur according to social contexts. Lucas (2014: 520-1) summarises the sociolinguistic model as presenting language change ‘as minimally a change common to all members of a particular subgroup of a speech community’ and as regarding differences in an individual’s grammar as a form of variation rather than change. Some form of bilingualism (or multilingualism) is central in language change (Lucas 2014: 521), and the term ‘bilingualism’ has a range of meanings referring to the ability to speak (and/or read and write) in more than one language. At the level of the individual, these meanings can range from being fully fluent in another language to the limited ability to use another language within specific circumstances; at the level of the speech community, the terms can refer to communities in which at least some people are bilingual or multilingual, or communities comprising more than one group of monolingual speakers, and combinations of these (Tyler 2011: 10). Weinreich (1953: 1) emphasizes that it is the speaker who is the ‘locus’ of language contact and that when languages are said to be ‘in contact’, this refers to individuals who speak both languages alternatively. Potentially, one or other of the bilingual

speaker's languages can interfere with the other(s). Weinreich distinguishes the transitory phase of interference within the individual bilingual speaker's speech from the phase in which the interference has become 'habitualized and established' in the language due to its frequent use by bilinguals (1953: 11). Habitualization is by no means assured. For instance, where there is restricted language contact through trading across geographical boundaries, and particularly if it is usually different people coming into contact, the transitory language interference is likely to be great, but it is unlikely to be habitualized into the language (Weinreich 1953: 90). In addition, the speech situation can influence the interference of a bilingual's speech according to whether the bilinguality of the interlocutors is constrained by the presence of monolinguals leading to less interference or is unconstrained because of the interlocutors being bilinguals and so leading to the possibility of greater interference (Weinreich 1953: 80-2).

Despite the significant advance in the direction of sociological explanations of language change, the possible linguistic outcomes of language contact were not clearly understood until later in the twentieth century. While Weinreich (1953: 109), for instance, states that a socio-culturally dominant language can borrow words from a language that is becoming obsolescent, he says that 'the conditions under which winning languages adopt more than loose lexical elements are still obscure'. He suggests that speakers learning a language imperfectly as they shift to it may leave long-lasting phonetic and grammatical influences on it 'in the form of a substratum' (1953: 109), but he offers this suggestion as something that needs further research (1953: 111-2).

### *Recent language contact theories*

With this focus on the speakers of a language, rather than on the language abstracted from its speakers, important breakthroughs in language contact theories were made by such people as Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and van Coetsem (1988, 1995, 2000) who document in detail various sorts of language contact and their possible linguistic outcomes. Their theories propose that languages interact in different ways depending on particular criteria such the transfer type (borrowing or imposition/interference) and the specific contact situation (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 20-1, 46, Van Coetsem 1988: 3, 35, 2000: 59, 73). Although the direction of language change is always from the source language (SL) to the recipient language (RL), terms Van Coetsem (1988) takes from Weinreich (1953: 31, 74-80), what linguistic material is transferred depends on whether the instigator, the 'agent', of the transfer has the SL or the RL as their dominant language (Van Coetsem 1988: 7). Van Coetsem (1988) makes a detailed study of how an individual interacts with their own language and another; Milroy (1993), among others, shows how language change is diffused throughout a language as the change is taken up by its speakers. The different ways contact can affect a language according to different contact situations are investigated by Thomason and Kaufman (1988). I outline van Coetsem, Milroy and Thomason and Kaufman's models of language change under contact situations in that order.

Van Coetsem uses the common term ‘borrowing’ to characterise the transfer of material from the source language to the recipient language through the agency of a speaker whose dominant language is the recipient language (RL-dominance) (1995: 66). An example of borrowing would be a word such as *boomerang*, which has been borrowed from an Aboriginal language by English speakers and borrowed from there into many other languages. Van Coetsem shows that four further operations occur during borrowing. The first two are ‘adaptation’ and ‘imitation’. Adaptation is the use of the nearest equivalent linguistic feature available to the speaker within his or her own language (Van Coetsem 1995: 72-7). I offer the common Australian English pronunciation of *croissant* as /kɪə'sɒnt/ as an example of adaptation, which shows a vague sense of the French pronunciation using only the borrower’s own phonological repertoire. Imitation, by contrast, is the attempt to retain the linguistic features of the source language (Van Coetsem 1995: 77). The pronunciation of *croissant* as /'kwasɔ̃/ would be an example of imitation, since it tries to mimic the French pronunciation (/kʁwa'sɔ̃/). The other two borrowing operations, ‘inclusion’ and ‘integration’, are also associated with recipient language agency (Van Coetsem 1995: 77-9). Inclusion, which is the use of a form structurally different from the recipient language, occurs before integration and is occasioned by social motivation, whereas integration is determined by the characteristics of the recipient language (Van Coetsem 1995: 78). An example of inclusion might be *Schadenfreude*, which is clearly a foreign word in English, and an example of integration might be *kindergarten*, which was originally equally foreign – they are both German – but has now become a standard English word and is often (mis)spelt as *kindergarden* by analogy with *garden*. Van Coetsem explains that imitation and adaption of the foreign (i.e. source language) pronunciation, for instance, occur in borrowing that is not fully incorporated into the recipient language (1988: 8), but that integration is the incorporation of something into the recipient language that modifies it (1988: 9).

In contrast with ‘borrowing’ by an RL-dominant speaker, transfer of material by a speaker with source language dominance constitutes ‘imposition’, and this occurs most often in the context of language acquisition (Van Coetsem 1988: 2-3, 1995: 65). Imposition can be noticed when someone has learnt to speak English as a second language but keeps their foreign ‘accent’ and even some of the syntax or lexis of their first language. Van Coetsem shows that changes such as ‘regularization’, ‘(over)generalisation’ and ‘reduction’ are associated with imposition in second-language learning. Regularisation and (over)generalisation work to smooth away the irregularities, for instance the plural of *foot* sometimes occurring as *foots* or *feets* instead of *feet* (Van Coetsem 1995: 74). Reduction, by contrast, is the lack of use of a linguistic feature due to lack of the requisite knowledge (Van Coetsem 1988: 50, 1995: 73-4). The effects of imposition move from maximal to zero as language acquisition moves from zero to maximal proficiency (Van Coetsem 1995: 74-5). The reason that these processes of imposition and acquisition work in opposite directions is that in the ‘acquisition process the SL speaker, by applying an “undoing” strategy, gradually decreases the SL domination of the RL’ (Van Coetsem 1995: 75). Once language acquisition has been successful, the speaker has then become bilingual and ‘the difference between the transfer types is *neutralized*’ (Van Coetsem 1995: 81). In contrast with the imposition from the language learner, the bilingual speaker no longer imposes but selects from either

language. The distinction between monolingual and bilingual speakers is a gradual one and it tends to be the bilingual who ‘initiates the borrowing, while the monolingual may either copy the *sl* pronunciation or adapt it to the *rl*’ (Van Coetsem 1988: 9).

Van Coetsem explains that analysing the different transfer types (borrowing and imposition) according to their agent of transfer would not be revealing without also considering the ‘stability gradient’ of language (1988: 3, 1995: 69) in order to evaluate the outcome of the language contact, saying ‘that stability determines the degree of transferability’ (1995: 68). More specifically, since some linguistic features are less stable and less structured, such as lexical items, they are more likely to be borrowed than the more stable and more structured features such as phonology and other grammar (1995: 67-9). By contrast, the transfer of the more stable and more structured features, such as articulatory habits, is more likely to occur through imposition (1995: 67-9). Just as the difference between transfer types becomes neutralised when a language learner becomes bilingual, the effect of the stability gradient becomes neutralised if language acquisition is successful. Van Coetsem (1988: 3) says, ‘A consideration of the two transfer types combined with the stability factor will consequently have a predictive power.’ How a particular language conforms to the predictive model varies, however. As Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 121-2) insist, similar languages in similar contact situations can have quite different outcomes.

As a speaker borrows or imposes linguistic material from the source language into the recipient language, he or she may influence other speakers within the speech community and may be influenced by them. It is at this point that Milroy (1993) adds significantly to the discussion concerning the mechanisms of language change in contact situations by clarifying how change is effected throughout the speech community. He, too, explains that sound changes are initiated by individual speakers (James Milroy 1993: 215), insisting on the distinction between speaker innovation and linguistic change within the language system, and explaining that innovation has to be taken up by at least one other speaker before it can be called change (1993: 221-2). Because it is hard to see linguistic changes happening at the level of the speaker, Milroy (1993: 219-21) looks at how the changes made by the speaker feed into the language system. He presents the familiar elongated S-curve graph that shows the uptake of an innovation by speakers: initially there is slow uptake – this forms the bottom of the ‘S’ – and then it accelerates – rising as the central slope of the ‘S’ – before tailing off towards the end of the uptake at the top of the ‘S’ (1993: 223). It is when the uptake accelerates, he explains, that the change becomes visible to the sociolinguist (1993: 223). It would be interesting to explore the possibility that it is the S-curve that accounts for the apparently sudden change between Old English and Middle English, but that is not possible here.

Traditional historical linguistics is not able to explain why some linguistic material is maintained but others changed, because it ignores the social aspect of change, and Milroy refers to Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968: 102) on this issue (James Milroy 1993: 216-7). He points out that, while there may be no linguistic advantage in a sound change (Cf. Labov 1963, 2011), there must be some importance to the speakers, either within the language as a

whole or in some of its dialects; ‘linguistic change is one of the things that is *negotiated* by speakers in the course of speech-exchanges’ (James Milroy 1993: 216-7). To explain why an innovation is sometimes taken up by a speech community and sometimes not, Milroy argues that the denser the social network, the less likely it is for linguistic change to occur due to social norms, and that, for instance, the close-knit community of Iceland explains why Icelandic is more conservative than English (1993: 225-9). He refers to Labov’s (1980: 261) characterisation of the speaker innovator as being of the highest social status in the local community and having the widest network both inside and outside the local community. Milroy (James Milroy 1993: 226) refers to Milroy and Milroy (1985), who point out that the ties in the local community must be close ties and those in the outer community weaker ties. It is likely to be the speaker with the weaker ties to the outside community that ‘is instrumental in *diffusing* changes’ and he says that it is with the weak ties that the change occurs faster (James Milroy 1993: 226). As an example of this diffusion by weak ties, he refers to Trudgill (1983: 56-9), who suggests that linguistic change can jump from one urban centre to another, leaving the intervening countryside unaffected. He says: ‘Urban development seems therefore to be implicated in the diffusion of vernacular features in a language’ (James Milroy 1993: 229). Although Milroy focuses on language change within a language group, the processes are also applicable to changes due to language contact. For instance, he explains that weak-tie social connections may also influence diffusion of innovations in language contact situations (1993: 228-9).

Like van Coetsem and Milroy, Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 4) explain that they set their historical linguistic analyses of languages within the sociolinguistic context of the language’s speakers, specifically along the lines of Weinreich, Labov and Dell Hymes, while retaining the viewpoint of historical linguistics (1988: 36). They argue that social forces easily outweigh ‘purely linguistic factors such as pattern pressure and markedness considerations’ (1988: 4), and that it is social factors that determine the direction and type of change, and the extent to which the language changes (1988: 19, 35). Unlike van Coetsem, Thomason and Kaufman focus on global changes within a language and see the speakers as a group rather than as individuals. And unlike Milroy, they focus on change due to language contact.

Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 21) define their term ‘borrowing proper’ as ‘the incorporation of foreign elements into the speakers’ native language’ while their language is being maintained – by this they mean that the speakers otherwise continue to speak their native language. This would appear to be the analogue of van Coetsem’s ‘borrowing’ for when a speaker dominant in the recipient language borrows material from the source language, allowing for the difference between Thomason and Kaufman’s focus on the language community as a whole and van Coetsem’s on the individual. However, Thomason and Kaufman’s terminology is not as clear-cut as van Coetsem’s and is often inconsistent: at times they use the term ‘borrowing’ to mean ‘borrowing proper’ and at other times they use it to mean any transfer of material regardless of the language dominance of the agent of the transfer. They also refer to ‘borrowing’ by bilingual speakers (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 41), where van Coetsem (1988: 9, 2000: 239) refers to ‘selection’ by a speaker who is fully bilingual. For greater clarity, I generally use van Coetsem’s terms ‘borrowing’ and

‘imposition’, except where I make use of other scholars’ terminology when discussing their ideas.

Thomason and Kaufman contrast ‘borrowing proper’ or ‘borrowing’ in its narrow sense with ‘substratum interference’, which they define as the result of ‘imperfect group learning during a process of language shift’ (1988: 38). Mistakes made because of imperfect learning are then passed on to the target language, ‘when they are imitated by original speakers of that language’ (1988: 39). They explain that the difference between the two types of language transfer, borrowing and substratum interference, depends on who the agent of the transfer is and the relative social status of the speakers (1988: 35). They warn, however, that attributing the cause of language influence to prestige alone is too simplistic; although prestige may play a part, particularly in borrowing proper, there are many counter examples and it is often irrelevant during language shift (1988: 43-6).

Instead of prestige, Thomason and Kaufman insist that the most essential social factor in determining the outcome of borrowing and substratum interference is the intensity of contact (1988: 46). Intensity of contact, they explain, involves the duration of the language contact, the relative numbers of the groups of speakers and the level of bilingualism between the two or more languages, which would vary for each contact situation (1988: 47). Crucially, intensity of contact affects language maintenance and language shift differently (1988: 47):<sup>2</sup> in the context of language maintenance, they explain, if there is little bilingualism on the part of the borrowing speakers, then normally only words are borrowed, whereas structural features are more likely to be borrowed with extensive bilingualism, particularly if the bilingualism has existed for a long time (1988: 41, 7-8). The outcome in the context of language shift is greatly dependent on the speed of the shift and the size of the shifting group, both of which are likely to affect the level of bilingualism. Small group shift leads to little or no interference (1988: 47, 119-20); large group shift after a long period of contact and probably full bilingualism also leads to little or no interference (1988: 41, 119-20); but large group shift over a short period with little access to target language speakers, resulting in little bilingualism, leads to much interference (1988: 41-7). As Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 10) put it, ‘If a whole population acquires a new language within possibly as little as a single lifetime, [...], the linguistic system which results may have massive interference from the structure(s) of the language(s) originally spoken by the group.’

Thomason and Kaufman look at language contact from a higher level of abstraction by focusing on the level of the group in contrast van Coetsem’s focus on the individual.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomason and Kaufman leave their terms ‘language maintenance’ and ‘language shift’ undefined. Typically, ‘language maintenance’ means that the language referred to continues to be spoken by a community, and language contact from this perspective is not necessarily disruptive. The term ‘language shift’ is often used in the narrow sense of a community shifting away from their original language to a new one, and reduction in the original language’s function may lead to language attrition and even language death. By contrast, Thomason and Kaufman use the term ‘language shift’ in a broader sense to refer to a speech community’s learning a new language, namely, the target language, and it appears to refer to second language acquisition regardless of whether the learners’ first language is retained.



However, their explanation of why some things are more likely to be borrowed or occur as interference shows some similarities to his ‘stability gradient’. They challenge the traditional idea that little or no lexical transfer means that structural transfer, in other words, transfer of morpho-syntactic features could not have occurred, and they state that ‘substratum interference need **not** be accompanied by extensive lexical transfer’ (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 20-1, their emphasis). They point out that substratum interference starts with phonology, syntax and morphology rather than with lexical items, explaining that speakers learning the target language will already have picked up the lexical items (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 39). As van Coetsem (1995: 68) explains, a speaker is likely to be more conscious of content words than of function words, and so content words are most readily learnt by the second-language learner. Matras (2009: 58) further explains that the learner not only has more conscious control over the choice of lexical words, but would also focus more on using lexis, rather than other features of the target language, as the means to communicate with speakers of the target language. For this reason, large-scale second-language learning, as occurs with language shift, is likely to cause the transfer of phonetic and morpho-syntactic features into the target language, without affecting the lexicon to any great extent (Matras 2009: 58, Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 38-9).

There is a difference, however, in the point at which phonology, morphology and syntax are imposed on or interfere with the recipient language during shift or second-language learning. Thomason and Kaufman explain that with only light to medium substratum interference, only phonology and syntax, but not morphology, is typically transferred (1988: 39). Morphology, particularly if it is a highly structured inflectional system, may be hard to transfer (1988: 52), but, they say, the common belief that a morphological expression of a function is more marked than a syntactic expression of it is incorrect (1988: 25-6). While markedness does play some part in the outcome of language change due to contact, it is easier to analyse the change in the case of language shift than it is in maintenance (1988: 51): universally marked features in the target language are less likely to be learnt by shifting speakers; conversely, marked features in the shifting speakers’ language are less likely to spread within the target language by imitation (1988: 51). These tendencies, they explain, may lead to a decrease in the markedness of the feature, particularly in light to moderate interference, and this is why language shift may appear to lead to simplification (1988: 32, 51). On the other hand, they say, language shift can also result in complications through an increase of markedness, although usually only in moderate to heavy interference (1988: 51). At this high level of interference due to shift, Thomason and Kaufman conclude, the result is as likely to be a complication of the target language as it is to be a simplification (1988: 29). One process of potentially simplifying the target language, by replacing a more marked morphological system with a less marked syntactic construction, is of particular importance in this thesis, since two of the three linguistic features I focus on, namely the construction with auxiliary *do* and the progressive construction *be + -ing*, are periphrastic syntactic constructions. It is possible to view the English *do*-construction as a simplification: if the construction arose due to contact with Brythonic, it may have arisen as a means of negotiating English verbal syntax, particularly in avoiding many forms of the strong verbs. Such periphrasis could have occurred in the context of language contact between the Brythonic and English languages

without a similar periphrastic construction existing in Brythonic. Indeed, just the fact of language contact can be enough to trigger change: van Coetsem (2000: 79-80) notes that language-internal change due to contact can lead to grammatical simplification, and Trudgill (2010: 8) notes that periphrastic constructions can occur as the result of language contact. On the other hand, it is also possible to regard *do*-periphrasis as a complication of English syntax, as McWhorter (2009) does, since this represents the introduction of a new structure into early English. The progressive construction of *be* + *-ing* is similarly both a simplification, as a syntactic rather than morphological feature, and a complication in that it introduces a new pattern of aspectual contrast with the Old English inflectional verbal morphology. Whether simplifications or complications, these new constructions in early English parallel constructions in the Brythonic languages and this has given rise to the Celtic Hypothesis that Brythonic speakers imposed Brythonic linguistic features on early English in accordance with the theories of van Coetsem and Thomason and Kaufman.

However, structural parallels and convergence of languages due to contact are not necessarily the result of language shift or of imposition/interference. Aikhenvald (2002) provides a detailed case study of a language contact situation between two genetically unrelated and typologically different language families in a long-term *Sprachbund* in the Amazon Basin resulting in their significant structural isomorphism (2002: 2, 59-60). Her research expands the theory of language contact by demonstrating in detail that the possible results of language contact include not only language attrition or obsolescence and the speaker's shift to the other language but also, conversely, gradual convergence and structural isomorphism of the two languages (2002: 6). Taking a sociolinguistic perspective, she determines the conditions that influence the outcome of language contact. On the one hand, if there is no socio-political dominance of one language over another, convergence could result in the languages adopting new patterns and using them alongside their old ones or there could be the creation of a new common grammar as a compromise between the languages' older language patterns. On the other hand, if there is socio-political dominance, resulting changes can show interference from the source language and what she calls the 'minority' language often suffers attrition (2002: 6-9). Aikhenvald also makes a distinction between the effects of contact between two languages and the effects of multilingual contact (2002: 13, 264-77). If it were possible to determine the extent to which Latin was spoken in England at the time of the contact between Brythonic and early English, Aikhenvald's analysis might have contributed more to my model. However, the relationship between spoken Latin, Brythonic and Old English is unclear. Her theory of language change in bilingual contact situations also has little relevance to my model because her focus is on long-term language contact without socio-political dominance, and so she has less to say that is relevant to the contact situation in Britain, where the Anglo-Saxons were by and large socially and politically dominant over the Britons. While Aikhenvald's theory and methodology may be more advanced than those of Thomason and Kaufman (1988), they are not incompatible.

One important concept discussed by Aikhenvald in relation to the isomorphism of the Amazon Basin *Sprachbund* is the concept of metatypy resulting from language contact. Ross (2007: 124, 2013: 19), whose term it is, defines metatypy as the grammatical restructuring of

linguistic constructions in one of the languages spoken within a bilingual community based on the model of constructions in the other language with significant typological impact. Metatypy is, therefore, an extreme form of calquing, going beyond lexical calquing and grammatical calquing (M. Ross 2007: 116). Matras and Sakel (2007) analyse this creation of a construction in one language modelled on another language by modifying linguistic material already existing in the replica language. Focusing on replicating constructions, rather than on borrowing linguistic material, they explain the mechanism of ‘pivot-matching’: the speaker identifies a structure in the model language that plays a pivotal role and invests a similar role to a structure in the replica language (2007: 829-30). While the creation of a new or modified grammatical construction through calquing by a bilingual speaker might appear to resemble the morpho-syntactic imposition or interference discussed by van Coetsem and Thomason and Kaufman, it is in fact significantly different. Unlike with imposition or interference, for which the agent is source-language dominant, with pattern replication through calquing the agent is recipient-language dominant and so this is not an example of substratum interference (Matras & Sakel 2007: 833). Rather than calquing being the result of imperfect second language acquisition, Matras and Sakel explain, it is the bilingual speaker’s active and creative expansion of his or her linguistic repertoire in communication (2007: 847-9), and here van Coetsem’s (1995: 81) explanation of the neutralisation of the transfer types through bilingual speakers’ selection is particularly relevant. Both Matras and Sakel (2007) and Aikhenvald (2002) focus on convergence by bilinguals and so emphasize the fact that a similarity or convergence of constructions in two languages in contact is not necessarily evidence of imposition/interference. However, because of the historical language contact situation between the Brythonic languages and early English, proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis can only realistically argue for Brythonic substratum influence on early English through imposition/interference due to abrupt and imperfect language acquisition of English by the Brythonic language speakers. For this reason, the linguistic models of language change due to contact described by van Coetsem and Thomason and Kaufman are more appropriate for evaluating the Celtic Hypothesis.

### *Language contact theories and the Celtic Hypothesis*

Although the concept of substratum influence is not new, the effects of language contact were not clearly understood until recently, and so the Celtic Hypothesis appeared incompatible with earlier theories. It is, however, considerably more viable with a contact model such as those proposed by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and van Coetsem (1988, 1995, 2000), where there is a significant difference between fluent speakers borrowing a lexical or syntactic item from another language (through recipient-language agency) and the interference or imposition caused most usually by a second-language learner’s inability to speak the target/recipient language well (through source-language agency). Specifically, it is imposition due to imperfect acquisition, rather than borrowing, that provides the model for the Celtic Hypothesis for the possible influence on early English (the recipient language) by the speakers of Brythonic Celtic (the source language). What the Celtic Hypothesis claims is that, while the early English speakers may have borrowed a few words, the Brythonic

speakers trying to learn English could be expected to have retained their more stable Brythonic linguistic features and imposed them on early English in the process. Although it would be a mistake to regard early English as a creole, what Thomason and Kaufman say about the development of creoles and pidgins fits the Celtic Hypothesis's model for the speakers of Brythonic Celtic who lived among the English: 'If a whole population acquires a new language within possibly as little as a single lifetime, [...], the linguistic system which results may have massive interference from the structure(s) of the language(s) originally spoken by the group' (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 10). It is one of the strengths of the most significant works by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis that they show some familiarity with how languages can change through contact with other languages. Several recent proponents rely, more or less explicitly, on Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) model – less often on van Coetsem's (1988) – and in this respect arguments supporting the Celtic Hypothesis have a sounder theoretical footing than most of the earlier studies of language contact. For instance, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 123), in perhaps the most wide-ranging argument for the Celtic Hypothesis, quote Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 61) on the appropriate methodology for analysing a possible contact situation by looking at different subsystems in the languages, rather than just one.

Although language contact theory advanced significantly towards the end of the twentieth century, some of the earlier proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis already had a basic understanding of how languages may change due to second-language acquisition in the context of a subordinated people learning the language of a more powerful people. Keller (1925) provides the first discussion of the parallel constructions in English and Brythonic using a model of substratum influence that is remarkably sophisticated for the period in which he was writing. He explains that influence from the substrate does not necessarily occur in vocabulary, but primarily in syntax (1925: 56). To demonstrate this he draws a parallel between the language contact situation between the Anglo-Saxons and the British Celts and that between the Germans and the Wends, a Slavic people living alongside Germans and under their control for centuries (1925: 55). He points out that there are few Slavic loan words in German despite the fact that the thought processes of the suppressed Wends must have been reflected in the language of their German overlords (1925: 55). He explains the reason the vocabulary was not transferred by the German-speaking Slavs and the English-speaking Celts by saying that using foreign words involves a literal translation, whereas it takes sufficient schooling to be able to adapt thought process into the sense of the foreign language (1925: 56). In this way, Keller makes a distinction between the lexis of the target language, which is comparatively easily learnt, and the syntax, which is not. Although Keller does not express his concept of language change due to a contact situation with any clarity or in modern terms, it foreshadows van Coetsem's (1988) language gradient. The fact that his understanding of how such language change occurs and his hypothesis of Celtic influence on English were mostly overlooked highlights the difficulty the Celtic Hypothesis has had in gaining acceptance until the historical and linguistic theoretical positions had advanced.

Dal (1952) provides the first systematic analysis of the evidence and the process of development, and she clarifies Keller's attempt to explain substratum influence and the language gradient, putting his explanation on a more scientific footing. With this as her linguistic model, Dal addresses the issue of the dating of the earliest certain attestations of the progressive construction of preposition and present participle in Middle English, a date that some consider too late to show Brythonic influence. Her argument foreshadows Tristram's (2004) model of diglossia in arguing that the British population maintained their native syntactic features when learning the English language and that these counted as peculiarities of the low register of the Brythonic-influenced spoken language in the Old English period and so were frowned upon in writing (1952: 166). She explains that, after the radical social change following the Norman conquest, these Celticisms rose up into the upper layers during the Middle English period (1952: 166).

More recently, Tristram (2002), who has written many articles and edited several books in support of the hypothesis, explicitly outlines the language contact theory of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Thomason (2001) as the basis of her own model of areal code-shifting and convergence to explain the interactions between the Brythonic and English languages and their increased grammatical analyticity (Tristram 2002: 112-3). Wishing to explain why there is a sudden typological change between written Old English and written Middle English, Tristram (2004) uses a similar model to argue that the shift from Late British to Old English is typical of language contact in which the adult learners of the target language transfer 'phonological and L1 features' but not lexical items (2004: 102). She speculates that large numbers of British people in the areas held by the Anglo-Saxons would have been required to learn the socially dominant English language quickly, resulting in large-scale language shift and a period of significant difference between written Old English and the low-status, Brythonic-influenced spoken English (2004: 103). Tristram (2007: 192-5) outlines the theory of contact linguistics that not only allows, but even supports, the hypothesis that the periphrastic construction with *be* expressing imperfective aspect was 'calqued from Late British', citing the following: Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Weinreich (1953), Thomason (2001), Winford (2003) and Milroy (1992). She addresses the lack of borrowing in English from Brythonic and says borrowing is not to be expected but, instead, transfer of grammatical and phonological features would occur (2007: 192-3), and she cites Thomason and Kaufman's (1988: 74-7) 'borrowing scale' that, they explain, is determined by the intensity and length of contact and the socio-economic relationship between the groups (Tristram 2007: 194). Because of the uneven balance of power in this contact situation, she argues, the language of the Anglo-Saxons was considered elite in contrast with the local Late British or British Latin languages, and gradually the general adult population shifted to Old English (2007: 194-5). However, she points out, 'The shift pattern is likely to have been uneven and variously conditioned, with some areas, such as the south-east, shifting much earlier than the north and south-west, with pockets in remoter areas preserving their British cultural and linguistic identity longer than elsewhere' (2007: 194).

McWhorter (2009), too, credits his model to Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) explanation that L1 speakers in a socially or politically marginal group may not necessarily bring their

lexicon with them into L2 (McWhorter 2009: 183). It is unfortunate that both Tristram (2002) and McWhorter retain the belief that social prestige is the determining factor in the outcome of language contact; both van Coetsem (1988: 13-4) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 44-5) explain that social prestige is not always relevant.

Similarly, Vennemann, another important proponent of the Celtic Hypothesis, draws on recent language contact theory to outline a scenario in which the Anglo-Saxon upper strata spoke the Old English represented by the writing and the British lower strata learnt to speak Old English, which led to a spoken variety that was structurally affected by Brythonic (2002a: 219-20), citing Thomason and Kaufman (1988) for the contact theory behind this (2002a: 228). This spoken variety, he argues, would have eventually surfaced in written documents through social mobility, for instance by the clergy and more generally after the Norman period reduced the dominance of the old upper strata (2002a: 220). He states that a delay of several centuries before the substratum influence surfaces in writing is essential for the argument (2002a: 220 n. 47), and he cites Schrijver (1999: 35-6) as a recent proponent for this reasoning.

### *Diglossia*

Many proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis expound or at least rely on the idea that there was a significant difference between the Old English spoken by the elite and that spoken by the majority. Tristram (2004, 2007) goes further than most proponents, however, when she refers to the language situation as ‘diglossic’, and there is some lack of clarity in her use of the term. Tristram’s argument is that Middle English began as a spoken language soon after the Anglo-Saxon conquest (2004: 87, 106), explaining that the transfer of Brythonic grammatical and phonological features into English would have occurred early, but only shows in writing ‘after the demise of Old English diglossia’ (2007: 192-3). Following Dal (1952: 108, 13, 66) and Tolkien (1963: 25), Tristram (2004) explains that the ‘high’ Old English literature, which she calls (OE<sub>w</sub>), where subscript *w* denotes the written language, retained a conservative level of language use for stylistic and socio-political reasons (2004: 89, 102, 2007: 203-4), and she argues that the ‘high’ Old English (OE<sub>H</sub>) spoken by the elite would not have been represented by (OE<sub>w</sub>) (2004: 103). She surmises that the spoken language of the elite (OE<sub>H</sub>) would have been closer to (OE<sub>w</sub>) at the beginning of the Old English period than it was in the later Old English period (2004: 103 n. 27). By contrast, she claims, there was a very big gap between (OE<sub>H</sub>) spoken by the elite and the (OE<sub>L</sub>) spoken by the majority of the population who had previously spoken Brythonic Celtic and British Latin (2004: 105). She does not say whether she thinks the gap between (OE<sub>H</sub>) and (OE<sub>L</sub>) might have lessened by the end of the Old English period. Tristram sees this difference between (OE<sub>w</sub>) and (OE<sub>L</sub>) as more than a simple difference in register between the written and spoken varieties of the language and says that it was significantly different structurally from it because of the morpho-syntactic influence from Brythonic (and Scandinavian) (2004: 103). Because of this, she argues, it is not to be expected that the (OE<sub>w</sub>) reflects the low Old English (OE<sub>L</sub>), which would only have been reflected in the literature in Middle English as the language of a ‘strongly regionalized

middle class', because by then English was no longer the prestigious language it had been and so the literature was no longer governed by conservative considerations (2004: 103-4, 2007: 214).

Tristram uses the term diglossia to characterise the difference between written (OE<sub>W</sub>), (OE<sub>H</sub>) spoken by the elite and (OE<sub>L</sub>) spoken by the majority (2004: 103), and says that diglossia explains the “‘sudden’ innovations’ in the Middle English dialects (2004: 105). However, she does not specify which types of diglossia she envisages here. When she says, ‘The diglossia of *spoken* Anglo-Saxon, whether the high or the low prestige variety, never surfaced in writing during the entire Anglo-Saxon period’ (2004: 103), this seems to refer to the variants (OE<sub>H</sub>) and (OE<sub>L</sub>). But when she says that (OE<sub>L</sub>) was not represented in writing because of a caste-like structure of society and ‘because of the elite’s exclusive control of the technology of writing’ (Tristram 2004: 105), she seems to be talking about diglossia between the written (OE<sub>W</sub>) and spoken (OE<sub>L</sub>) forms of the language, rather than the difference she made earlier between the two spoken varieties. In essence, Tristram describes a form of triglossic distinction between early (OE<sub>H</sub>) being a predominantly Germanic English and late (OE<sub>L</sub>) being the Brythonicized English spoken by most people, which gives two spoken forms to contrast with (OE<sub>W</sub>) (2004: 103).

A diglossic situation may arise when a speech community has two or more linguistic varieties, whether different social varieties, different dialects or different languages. Ferguson (1959) introduces the term ‘diglossia’ to refer to different variants of a language and designated the high-prestige variant (H) and the low one (L). Fishman (1967: 29-30) extends the term to apply to situations in which two or more languages are used within a community each with a separate sphere of use or function, where, for instance, language or language variant (H) could be used for religion, education etc. and (L) at home and at work (1967: 30). Fishman divides the interaction of diglossia and bilingualism into four categories: (1) diglossia with bilingualism, (2) bilingualism without diglossia, (3) diglossia without bilingualism, and (4) neither diglossia nor bilingualism (1967: 30), although he says category (4) is very rare, since it would have to be a small, self-sufficient and ‘undifferentiated’ speech community (1967: 36). It should be noted that this division of the relationship between diglossia and bilingualism (or multilingualism) into four static categories not only misleadingly suggests the categories have rigid boundaries, but also is more appropriate for synchronic language states than for diachronic developments. Nonetheless, a discussion of the first three categories shows the complexity of the language situation in England where several languages were used (English, Latin, Brythonic and Scandinavian languages) in the first few centuries after the first Anglo-Saxon settlements.

Fishman explains that category (1), diglossia with bilingualism of the whole community, is compartmentalized by function or role where access to a variety of roles by the whole community is readily available (Fishman 1967: 31-2). This category does not appear to apply to the linguistic situation in England during the Old English period as far as different varieties of English is concerned. A difference in register between the high-status written and spoken Old English of the elite and the low-status Old English spoken by the majority might be

compartmentalised according to function, but these functions would presumably not have been readily available to all.

Fishman's category (3), diglossia without national bilingualism, encompasses situations where there are different speech communities that tend to be monolingual and so need translators or interpreters to communicate with the other (1967: 33). This category is applicable to early England, although only in so far as the situation can be viewed piecemeal and static. We can consider possible situations where Brythonic-speaking Celts and Anglo-Saxons lived in separate, monolingual areas and had little interaction with one another. While this does seem to have occurred in some areas,<sup>3</sup> it is not a situation that has particular relevance to the Celtic Hypothesis, since it precludes significant language contact even if only temporarily. There is a complicating factor in this category (3) of diglossia without national bilingualism, since the separation of Brythonic and Old English may have been bridged by a third language; some of the Celtic speech communities may have been bilingual in Brythonic and British Latin, or even monolingual in British Latin. In both the Celtic and English religious centres, Latin would have remained a high-status language, although as a function restricted to the religious or the elite minority. Such triglossia differs from Tristram's in that hers refers to variants of one language (the narrower definition) and here there are three separate languages involved (the broader definition).

The inverse of diglossia without national bilingualism, namely category (2) of individual bilingualism without national or socio-cultural diglossia, Fishman describes as being associated with 'rapid social change, or great social unrest' (1967: 34-5). It is likely that Tristram has this category in mind for the language contact situation between English and Brythonic. Fishman explains that, as the different languages lose their compartmentalised spheres of use, they 'come to influence each other phonetically, lexically, semantically and even grammatically much more than before [... and] bilingualism without diglossia tends to be transitional' (Fishman 1967: 36). The situation Fishman describes here is found in societies of significant social inequality, including slavery, feudalism and serfdom. In those social contexts where many speakers of Brythonic Celtic were enslaved by the Anglo-Saxons,<sup>4</sup> it is fair to assume the Britons would have learnt Old English swiftly and disruptively. Matras (2009: 58-9) uses the term 'unidirectional bilingualism', where a socially subordinate group of people retain their first, low-status language for use in some specific contexts but use the language of the socially dominant group to gain access to 'certain activity domains' controlled by them, while the socially dominant group has no need to become bilingual. Such unidirectional bilingualism on the part of the socially and politically subordinated Brythonic speakers and monolingualism on the part of the English speakers was probably characteristic of the earlier part of the Old English period within England. Even where Brythonic-speaking Celts and Anglo-Saxons lived in close proximity as near equals, i.e. not in a slave-master relationship, it may be natural to assume that Old English had high status and Brythonic low status. In such a situation, Britons who were bilingual in Brythonic

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 2 on the contact situation in Britain discusses evidence of this.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 2 on the contact situation in Britain also discusses evidence of this.



and English would presumably have spoken English in certain social situations, compartmentalising their languages according to function and so tending towards Fishman's category (1).

During the Old English period there was presumably a transitional phase of second-language acquisition as the prime locus and cause of language change in the context of various of Fishman's (1967) categories of diglossia and bilingualism according to differences in registers, dialects and languages. As Matras explains, diglossia itself does not necessarily lead to the imposition of morpho-syntactic features (2009: 58). Instead, a combination of sudden language shift with imperfect learning on a large scale would have increased the likelihood of imposition (Matras 2009: 58, Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 41-7, 119-20). When many individuals with the same L1 are acquiring the same L2 under the same conditions, a collective, transitional interlanguage can stabilise or become fossilized as an ethnolect before perfect learning is achieved (Matras 2009: 74-6). And this is Thomason and Kaufman's (1988: 41-7, 119-20) ideal scenario for the transfer of language features from the learner's language to the target language.

However, it would be a mistake to expect all the impositions on early English to have been retained in English, or to expect all impositions to have been made during the same period. Furthermore, it is important not to assume that the situation was the same throughout the territories held by the Anglo-Saxons. For instance, Schrijver's (2002: 87-110) theory is that the different dialects and the changes between Old English and Middle English can be explained by assuming that Lowland Britain – characterised by Jackson (1953: 96-106) as the fertile region to the south and east of the Pennines – was primarily British Latin speaking while the Highlands – the infertile mountains and moorlands to the north and west (Jackson 1953: 96-106) – were Brythonic speaking. From this, Schrijver argues that the Old English material does not show much influence from Brythonic, since the Saxons were in the Lowland, Latin-speaking area, while the Middle English of the Anglian area shows much more influence from Brythonic. This is also an interesting view, although, without evidence of the extent of British Latin being spoken by the Britons, it is hard to evaluate. Jackson himself argues that, while the language of official business and culture in the Romanised towns and estates of the Lowland Zone would have been Latin, many people in the Lowland rural regions would have remained bilingual in Latin and Brythonic (1953: 96-106).

White (2002, 2003) goes further in dividing Britain according to the balance of the four main languages: Brythonic Celtic, British Latin, Old English and Old Norse. In this way, he is able to characterise the different linguistic changes occurring in different areas that led to different English dialects. Tristram (2004) uses this division to argue that the rates of language acquisition would have differed in different areas leading to different types of outcomes, and she supports this with the different speeds of acculturation evidenced by archaeology and genetics. Although this seems a promising avenue to explore as a way of explaining different patterns in the diffusion of linguistic changes, tracing the diffusion is difficult due to lack of evidence. Furthermore, arguments based on diffusion presented in support of the Celtic Hypothesis with respect to one linguistic feature may be inconsistent with the arguments

presented with respect to another feature. These and other variables combine to account for a complicated pattern of possible imposition of Brythonic linguistic features onto early English.

One major problem for the Celtic Hypothesis lies in the significance of the low-status, spoken languages in the contact scenarios proposed by its proponents to explain the development from Old English to Middle English: there is no direct evidence of the spoken language. Relying on written forms of the language exacerbates the difficulty in interpreting the linguistic situation, not only because of its being indirect evidence. It also increases the tendency to look at the language situation as involving monolithic groups, taking the available written evidence as being representative of the whole and obscuring the probable variety of social and linguistic contexts. Another problem of working with written forms of long-dead languages is that it is natural, if misguided, to take the final result of change as teleologically determined, and this further encourages the tendency to simplify the complex language situation that may have existed during the Old English period.

## **Conclusion**

The history of the early English language can be situated within the documented history of the English speakers' contacts with the Celtic inhabitants. Although this documentation is patchy, biased and sometimes hard to interpret, the fact that it exists at all may help to establish what contact there was between the speakers of early English and the speakers of early Brythonic Celtic. It appears likely that for several centuries there was a complicated language contact situation between speakers of Brythonic and speakers of Old English, along with speakers of other languages. At the end of this time, the language spoken in England was predominantly Middle English of one dialect or another. While specific details of the language contact situation cannot be determined with confidence, it appears that it was the type of situation that had the potential to lead to significant imposition of Brythonic features into early English. Whatever the actual situations in different areas and in different social circumstances in which the Brythonic speakers had the opportunity to learn English, during the phase in which their learning was still incomplete, it was possible that they would impose Brythonic linguistic features onto the English language according to the theories of van Coetsem (1988, 1995, 2000), Thomason and Kaufman (1988), and others. However, it is impossible to say what proportion of Britons living within Anglo-Saxon territories were monolingual in Brythonic, perfectly or imperfectly bilingual, or even monolingual English speakers. On the basis of probability, there was likely to be much variety, not only in the proportions of people of Brythonic heritage speaking English, but also in their level of acquisition of the target language. And these variations would presumably have changed through the period of development from Old to Middle English and regionally across England.

Despite these difficulties, according to Thomason and Kaufman's theory of contact-induced interference through language shift and van Coetsem's theory of imposition of stable linguistic features through source language agentivity, it cannot be ruled out on theoretic

grounds that English may have been influenced by the Brythonic language, and most recent works in support of the Celtic Hypothesis refer to current language contact theories to support the hypothesis. It is therefore interesting to note that some of the earliest proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, such as Keller (1925), Preusler (1938) and Dal (1952), also showed some awareness of how languages change in language contact situations, in particular that imposition of L1 linguistic features tends to affect morpho-syntactic structures rather than lexis.

My next three chapters discuss the likelihood that such influence by the Brythonic language in fact occurred and that it is because of some such imposition that Middle English differs so greatly from Old English.

## Chapter 3: The dual paradigm of *be*

*If thou beest not immortal, look about you.*

(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* 2.iii)

### Introduction

In this chapter I evaluate the hypothesis that Brythonic Celtic influenced early English in its use of two separate paradigms for the present tense – or more accurately the non-past – of ‘be’: *bēon* and *wesan*. This dual paradigm exists in the earliest extant texts in Old English and in all regions of England, and it closely parallels the dual paradigms for the present tense of ‘be’ in the Brythonic languages: *bod* in Welsh (spelled *bot* in Middle Welsh orthography), *bos* in Cornish and *bezañ* in Breton (*bot* in Old Breton). In having a dual paradigm, a complete and independent pattern for both verbs, Old English differs from the other West Germanic languages, which either have only one root or combine different roots into a single paradigm for the present tense of ‘be’ (Hickey 2012: 500-1, Tolkien 1963: 31). Since the other West Germanic languages do not appear to have a dual paradigm for ‘be’, the parallel between Brythonic and early English dual paradigms is striking. The Celtic Hypothesis is that it can only be explained in English as arising, or as being retained, through language contact with Brythonic. However, certain factors create problems for the hypothesis. Firstly, since the dual paradigm was already present in the earliest English texts, this challenges the idea that Brythonic features were shunned in West Saxon texts, an idea that is generally accepted by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis. Secondly, the roots of the *bēon* and *wesan* paradigms are inherited from Proto-Indo-European and similar forms are attested in the other Germanic languages, so it cannot be ruled out that the dual paradigm in English arose out of inherited Germanic features.

The first of the six sections of this chapter sets out the forms and functions of this linguistic feature in Old English and compares them with the parallel forms of ‘be’ in Middle Welsh. The second section presents some of the standard explanations for the origin of the two English paradigms, and the third discusses the proposals put forward that Brythonic influenced early English with regards to this feature. Next, I discuss evidence for this feature in Brythonic. The fifth section evaluates from a theoretical angle whether the evidence supports the possibility of the contact between Brythonic and early English having caused or contributed to the existence of this construction in early English, or whether the dual paradigm could have arisen without contact with Brythonic. Finally, I evaluate the extent to which the Celtic Hypothesis appears to be supported by the evidence and the theoretical considerations.

## Part 1: The hypotheses

### Section 1: The Old English verbs *bēon* and *wesan*

Old English differs from Modern English in forming two separate paradigms based on different roots for the verb ‘to be’ in the present tense: *bēon* from PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>uh<sub>2</sub>-* (often simplified to *\*bheu-*)<sup>5</sup> and *wesan*, whose present indicative and subjunctive forms are from PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>es-* (simplified to *\*es-*) – the infinitive *wesan* itself comes from a different root again, namely PIE *\*h<sub>2</sub>wes-* (simplified to *\*wes-*). While Modern English still has forms from these roots, there is now only one paradigm for *be* in the present tense. On the whole, the dual paradigm was lost from the beginning of Middle English, although Mustanoja (1960: 583) suggests that there are still traces of the *bēon* paradigm in the present tense used to express the future in early Middle English and perhaps even later into the Middle English period.

#### *The difference in meaning*

The *wesan* and *bēon* forms of ‘be’ are considered to convey different nuances of the present tense predominantly along aspectual lines. The following table, based on Campbell (1959: 349), shows the two paradigms in the standardised West Saxon dialect of Old English and the semantic distinctions between them according to standard descriptions.

Old English	<i>wesan</i> ‘be’	<i>bēon</i> ‘be, shall be’
<i>Morphological forms</i>		
Singular 1	eom	bēo
2	eart	bist
3	is	biþ
Plural 1/2/3	sindon/sint	bēoþ
<i>Semantic differentiation</i>		
Campbell (1959: 350-1)	‘a present state provided its continuance is not especially regarded’	‘(a) an invariable fact, [...] or (b) the future, [...] or (c) iterative extension into the future’
Lutz (2009: 233)		habitual, durative and iterative
Hickey (2012: 500-1)	‘existential present’	‘habitual present’
Petré (2013: 310)	‘specificity, present validity and stativity’	‘future validity’, generic and durative

Table 3.1: The forms and functions of the Present Indicative of Old English *wesan* and *bēon*

The distinction between the paradigms according to aspect is also made by Keller (1925: 57), the earliest proponent of the Celtic Hypothesis for this linguistic feature. He presents

<sup>5</sup> Except where the form is important, I use the simplified forms.

examples to show that *bēon* is used in abstract sentences and expresses eternal verities (1), while *wesan*, he says, occurs in concrete sentences (2):<sup>6</sup>

- (1) ne **bið** swylc earges sīð  
not **bēon-3SG** such coward's way  
'such is not the coward's way' (Beowulf 2541)

- (2) Heorot **is** gefælsod, bēah-sele beorhta  
Heorot **wesan-3SG** cleansed ring-hall bright  
'Heorot, the bright hall, is cleaned' (Beowulf 1175)

While *wesan*, Keller says, has only present meaning (3), *bēon* also has a future sense (4), as can be seen from his examples from *Beowulf* 1761-3, where he gives several translations for *is* (1925: 57):

- (3) nū **is** þīnes mægnes blæd āne hwīle ...  
now **wesan-3SG** your might glory a while  
'nun **ist** – **besteht**, **währt** – die Fülle deiner Kraft eine Zeitlange ...' (his translation)  
'now there is/exists/lasts glory of your might for a while'
- (4) ... eftsōna **bið** þæt þec ādl oððe ecg eafodes getwæfeð  
after.soon **bēon-3SG** that you sickness or edge strength rob  
'... soon afterwards it will be that sickness or sword-edge rob you of strength'

Hickey (2012: 500-1) also notes that the 'habitual present' was used for the future in West Saxon. Using a present form to express the future is not in itself surprising: not having a future tense form, ordinary verbs, too, used the present tense to express the future in Old English. However, Keller discusses the original meaning of the PIE root *\*bheu-* from which the *bēon* forms are derived and says that, on the basis of Old Indic [Sanskrit] *bhavati* 'become, be', Greek *φύεται* 'grow, arise, be born', and Latin *fit* 'become' and *futurus* 'going to be', it originally meant inchoative 'become', rather than 'be' (1925: 58). On the basis of this, he says that the primary sense is future, and that the absolute, generic present sense developed from it (Keller 1925: 58). Here he is followed by Petré (2013: 310), who says the one basic meaning of *bið* is 'future validity', and he derives the generic and durative meanings from this meaning.

However, Mitchell (1985: 256-9) takes issue with distinguishing between the two present forms along the lines of concrete and abstract, since, he says, this leads to too many exceptions. Mitchell and Robinson (1992: 108-9), for instance, point out that *is* can also be used for an eternal truth, the supposed function of *bið*, and they provide the following example:

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise indicated glosses and translations are mine.

- (5) heofena rice      **is**              gelic þæm hiredes ealdre  
 heaven kingdom **wesan-3SG** like the men's lord  
 'the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household'  
 (Matthew 20.1)

Mitchell provides several examples of the indiscriminate use of the two forms in similar contexts (1985: 261-3), although his quotation of Ælfric's description at *Grammar* 201.8 of *eom* 'I am' as being used to express existence is ill-advised, since Ælfric is describing the Latin word *sum* 'I am', not *eom*.

Hock (1986: 2) gives a clear example of the difficulty in determining the distinction between the two paradigms in an Old English gloss (7) of the Vulgate Lord's Prayer (6), where both forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular are given as translation of the one Latin verb *es* 'you are' and where no distinction of meaning could be intended:

- (6) Pater noster, qui **es**              in caelis  
 father our      who **be-2SG** in heavens  
 'Our Father, who are in heaven'
- (7) Fader urer ðu **arð**              [oððe] ðu **bist**              in heofnum [oððe] in heofnas  
 father our you **wesan-3SG** or      you **bēon-2SG** in heaven or      in heaven  
 'Our Father who art (or) who beest in heaven (or) in heaven'  
 (Northumbrian Gloss on the Gospels, Matthew 6:9)

Giving alternatives appears to be typical of the *Northumbrian Gloss* in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. This complicates analyses of the relative frequencies of the forms and of their semantic ranges.

Bolze (2013) analyses the use of the *b*-forms and what she calls 'the non-*b*-forms' (i.e. the *wesan* paradigm) in the early eleventh-century version of the *West Saxon Gospels* and the tenth-century Northumbrian glosses of the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. She confirms the main semantic distinction between the two forms as being between future and present reference respectively (Bolze 2013: 221). However, while she finds that the *b*-form is the only form used to express iterative aspect, both *b*-forms and non-*b*-forms are found in contexts with durative, habitual and generic aspect (Bolze 2013: 223-7). She also finds that the *b*-form does not appear to be marked for habituality, since, where it is used in a habitual context, the Latin has a future tense verb form (Bolze 2013: 227), arguing that the determining feature appears to be the tense and mood of the original Latin verb rather than the aspect suggested by the context (Bolze 2013: 225-6). She stresses that the semantic distinction between the *b*-form and the non-*b*-form in the indicative is one of tense, of future and present respectively (Bolze 2013: 228). Discussing the *b*-forms, she says, 'Their claimed use in certain aspectual references could also be observed; however, they usually translate Latin future tense forms nevertheless. It is therefore often uncertain to what extent an implied durative, iterative, generic or habitual quality of a sentence influenced the translators' choice of the paradigm of

“to be” in the Old English Gospels’ (Bolze 2013: 228). In the present subjunctive, the majority (75.67%) of examples of the *b*-form in the *West Saxon Gospels* convey the future – there is no *b*-form subjunctive in the Northumbrian dialect according to Bolze – while the non-*b*-form is used when future meaning is not possible (2013: 231). Bolze’s analysis of the use of the two forms in these two texts challenges the earlier accounts of the semantic distinction between the forms, and it is of particular value that she investigates not only the aspectual sense of the verb but also the tense of the Latin verb being glossed or translated.

The existence of these two paradigms of Old English ‘be’, whether or not there is a clear semantic distinction between them, contrasts with the other West Germanic languages. In Old High German, for instance, there was only one paradigm for ‘be’, which is often considered as predominantly formed on the *\*bheu*-root with only the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural being formed from the *\*es*- root (Kirk 1966: 68). Ringe (2006: 196, 262-3), however, among others, considers Old High German *bim* to show analogical *b*- from the perfective present PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>uh<sub>2</sub>-*, rather than being directly derived from PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>uh<sub>2</sub>-* itself. Whatever the range of meanings of the present tense of the Old High German paradigm ‘be’, they were not expressed morphologically, and the single paradigm can be seen in Table 3.2.

Old High German	<i>wesan</i> ‘be’
Singular 1	bim
2	bist
3	ist
Plural 1	birum
2	birut
3	sint

Table 3.2: Old High German Present Indicative *wesan* ‘be’

Because Old English seems to be anomalous among the Germanic languages in this regard, it has been argued that the Old English paradigms for ‘be’ were influenced by the Brythonic languages, which also have two independent paradigms for ‘be’ in the non-past. It is particularly noted by Tolkien (1963: 31-2) among others that the phonetic forms and the semantic functions of the two paradigms in Middle Welsh and Old English resemble each other remarkably. The two independent paradigms for ‘be’ in Middle Welsh can be seen in the following table based on Evans (1964: 136), where the unmarked simple Present contrasts with the Consuetudinal Present/Future, which is said to have a habitual or future sense.

Middle Welsh	Present	Consuetudinal Present/Future
Singular 1	wyf/oef	bydaf/bytif
2	wyt	bydy
3	yw/(y) mae/(y) taw/oes <sup>7</sup>	byd/bit/bi/bydhawt/biawt
Plural 1	ym	bydwn
2	ywch	bydwch
3	ynt/(y) maent/y maen	bydant/bidan/bydawnt/ bwyant/bint

<sup>7</sup> These different forms of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular are used in different grammatical contexts. The form *taw* (or *y taw*) is from *\*PIE steh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘stand’ (D. S. Evans 1964: 144 n.). I have a brief discussion of the use of this verb as an auxiliary in Indo-European languages in Chapter 5.



Table 3.3: The Middle Welsh Present Indicative and Consuetudinal Present/Future' Indicative of *bot* 'be'

The simple Present form (*wyf*), often but not necessarily in combination with the verbal particle *yn* and the verbal noun, is used to express present time and an 'action continuing up to the present', while the Consuetudinal Present and Future form (*bydaf*) is commonly used to express the future. The Consuetudinal Present/Future can also be used to express the universal or gnomic present (D. S. Evans 1964: 108-9, 38-9). (Other verbs simply use the present tense to express the future, like in Old English.) It may be worth noting that there is a similar, although not exact, distinction between the Imperfect (*oedwn*) and the Consuetudinal Past (*bydwn*) paradigms of *bot*, while other verbs have only the Imperfect (D. S. Evans 1964: 109-11). Evans provides an example of the Present (8) of *bot*, although unfortunately not of the Consuetudinal Present and Future:

- (8) Arawn urenhin Annwuyn **wyf** i  
 Arawn king Annwuyn **be-1SG.PRES I**  
 'I am Arawn, king of Annwn'  
 (*Pwyll* 44; Evans (1964: 139) PKM 2.26)

Petré (2014: 43) gives the following examples from early Middle Welsh poetry to show the contrast between what he calls the non-habitual and the habitual, in other words the Present (9) and the Consuetudinal Present/Future (10):

- (9) stauell gyndylan **ys** tywyll heno  
 hall Cynddylan **is** dark tonight  
 'Cynddylan's hall is dark tonight  
 (*Stafell Gynddylan*, Red Book of Hergest 1044.44)
- (10) **bit** amlwc marchawc  
**is** clearly.visible horseman  
 'a horseman is usually clearly visible' (*Bidiau*, Red Book of Hergest 1030.11)

(Petré's glosses and translations)

The Old English and Middle Welsh dual paradigms of 'be' show parallels, not only in their semantic distinctions but also in their forms. The parallel between the 1<sup>st</sup> person singulars, Old English *eom* and Middle Welsh *wyf* [uɪ:v], or [uɪ:β] (D. S. Evans 1964: 9, Morris-Jones 1913: 163), is obscured by the phonetic change within some of the Celtic languages of -[m]- to -[β]- or -[v]- in some contexts (Morris-Jones 1913: 332). Like Old English *eom*, the Middle Welsh *wyf* paradigm is derived from PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>es-*, via the Insular Celtic root *\*(e)s-*. However, as Vennemann (2013: 298) puts it, 'the Celtic *s*-paradigm rarely shows its *s* anymore, owing to intense phonological change'. Middle Welsh *bydaf*, on the other hand, is derived from the Insular Celtic *\*b<sup>h</sup>uije/o-* from PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>uh<sub>2</sub>-* (Petré 2014: 43). Both the Old English and Middle Welsh dual paradigms show variant forms for some persons and

numbers. While these variants do not greatly affect the parallel between the two languages, they do complicate the parallel and may compromise the validity of the Celtic Hypothesis to that extent.

### *Variant forms in Old English*

The linguistic situation in Old English of the copulas *bēon* and *wesan* ‘be’ is more complicated than it would appear from the forms I gave above at Table 3.1; not only are they based on one dialect, West Saxon, but they also ignore the variants found in that dialect as well as those of other regions. Campbell (1959: 349-51) lists the main regional variants separately. I combine the variant forms he gives for *wesan* in Table 3.4 and *bēon* in Table 3.5, primarily only where they differ from West Saxon, with curved brackets for less common variants and square brackets for the forms of *wesan* that had not been replaced by the forms based on the *\*es-* root.

	West Saxon	Late West Saxon	Mercian	South East	Northumbrian
<i>Present indicative</i>					
Singular 1	eom		eam	(eam)	am
2	eart		earð/eart/earþ/arþu		arð
3	is		is		is
Plural 1/2/3	sindon/sint		sind(un)/sint/earun/arun	(sin(t)/sion(t)/seondan/siondan)	sint/sindon/aron
<i>Present subjunctive</i>					
Singular	sīe	(sī/sȳ)	sīe	(sīo/sī)	sīe/sē
Plural	sīen				
<i>Imperative</i>					
Singular		[wes]	[wes/wæs/woes]		[wes/wæs/woes]
Plural		[wesap]	[wesap]		[wosað/wosas]
<i>Infinitive</i>					
		[wesan]	[wesa]		[wosa]

Table 3.4: Regional variations of the Old English *wesan* ‘be’ paradigm

	Early West Saxon	West Saxon	Mercian	Northumbrian
<i>Present indicative</i>				
Singular 1	-	bēo	bīom/bēom	bīom/bēom/bīum
2		bist	bist	bist
3		biþ	bið/biþ/bēoþ	bið
Plural 1/2/3	(bīoþ)	bēoþ	bīoð/bēoþ/bīoþ/(bīað)	biðon/(bioðon)/(bīað)
<i>Present subjunctive</i>				
Singular	(bīo)	bēo	bēo	(bīe/bīa) <sup>8</sup>
Plural	(bīon)	bēon		-
<i>Imperative</i>				
Singular	(bīo)	bēo	bīo	-
Plural	(bīoþ)	bēoþ	bīoð	-
<i>Infinitive</i>				
	(bīon)	bēon	bēon	(bīan)

Table 3.5: Regional variations of the Old English *bēon* ‘be’ paradigm

Despite the many variations within the dual paradigm of the present tense of *be*, there is a clear distinction between the *bēon* part of the dual paradigm, and the forms in the other paradigm. There is also more unity within the *bēon* paradigm than there is within the other one. Indeed, in the *wesan* half of the dual paradigm in the present tense, the indicative and the subjunctive are not in fact formed from the *\*wes-* root, but rather are added through suppletion mainly from the *\*es-* root. The infinitive *wesan* and the imperative forms are retained in the present tense, and this root also provides the forms for the past tense of both *eom* and *bēo* by overlapping suppletion. It is common not to look beyond these three roots. Partridge (1982: 174), for instance, gives the Indo-European roots for the verb *be* as *\*es-* ‘exist’, *\*bheu-* ‘become’ and *\*wes-* ‘remain’. Even recently, Bybee (2007: 53) talks of the three roots of *be*. However, the suggestion that four roots combine to form the complete Old English paradigm of *be* was made in the late nineteenth century, according to Made (1910), and many scholars still hold this opinion. Petré (2013: 302), for instance, distinguishes, apart from the forms based on *wes-* and *bēo-*, one root for the present indicative *eam*, *is*, *sind(on)* and the subjunctive *sie*, *sien*, with *eart* and *earon* being formed from yet another root (Petré 2013: 303).

The Old English forms *eam*, *is*, *sind(on)* and some of their variants, as well as the subjunctive forms *sie*, *sien* and some of their variants, are derived from the present indicative paradigm for the PIE root *\*es-* ‘be’, which is presented in Table 3.6 based on the forms given by Hock (1986: 222). How this PIE *\*es-* root might have played out in Germanic can be seen from the East Germanic Gothic, which has all its present indicative forms from the *\*es-* root, as can be seen from Lambdin’s (2006: 21) paradigm of Gothic below. In contrast with these forms, according to Crawford (2012: 15), the Old English 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular *eart* is cognate with Old West Norse *ert*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular of *vera/vesa* ‘be’, which he follows Ringe (2006: 154) and others in deriving from PIE *\*er-/or-* ‘arise, arouse’, which Petré (2014: 91) gives as PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>er-* ‘move, stand up’. Gordon’s (1966) paradigm of Old Norse *vesa* ‘be’ shows the *\*er-/or-* root from which the English form *are* is believed to be derived:

<sup>8</sup> Bolze (2013: 229-30) argues that *bīe/bīa* in Northumbrian are indicative, not subjunctive.

	Proto-Indo-European * <i>h<sub>1</sub>es-</i>	Gothic * <i>es-</i> ‘be’ from PIE * <i>h<sub>1</sub>es-</i>	Old West Norse <i>vera/vesa</i> ‘be’ from PIE * <i>h<sub>1</sub>er-</i>
Singular 1	es-mi	im	em
2	esi	is	ert
3	es-ti	ist	er
Plural 1	s-me/os	sijum	erum
2	s-te	sijuþ	eruð
3	s-e/onti	sind	eru

Table 3.6: Paradigms of the Present Indicative of ‘be’ in Proto-Indo-European, Gothic and Old West Norse

At first glance, it might be assumed that the forms *eart* and *earon* entered Old English through contact with Old Norse during the long period of Scandinavian settlement in Britain. However, Crawford (2012: 15) assumes *eart* entered both pre-Old English and pre-Old West Norse from Proto-Germanic \**arþ*, and so, as Petré (2014: 91) explains, these two forms are cognates with, rather than borrowings from, the Old Norse forms. While the derivation of *eart* and *earon* is not directly related to the origin of the Old English dual paradigm, the existence of forms from this root within two of the early Germanic languages indicates that suppletion in ‘be’ was already occurring early in Germanic. This may have a bearing on the fact that, unlike Old English, the other Germanic languages did not have a dual paradigm for the copula, but had single suppletive, mixed paradigms. On the other hand, it is possible that having suppletive paradigms might make it more likely that a dual paradigm could arise. And this is the question: given that mixed and suppletive paradigms were common in Germanic on the Continent, why did Old English have a dual paradigm from these suppletive roots when the other Germanic languages did not? In the next section, I give a brief outline of attempts to answer this question which do not argue specifically for Brythonic influence.

## Section 2: Standard theories

There is no doubt that the forms of ‘be’ in the early English language are developed from Proto-Indo-European roots, so the fact that it had these various forms is not surprising. Instead, the issue is why Old English and early Middle English made a semantic distinction between the \**es-*/\**er-* forms and the \**bheu-* forms as a dual paradigm in the present tense. While all other attested Germanic languages and some other Indo-European languages use or have used more than one Indo-European root for ‘be’, it is only in Early English that there is clear evidence of a dual paradigm.

However, as Ahlqvist (2010: 52) points out, the origin of the Old English dual paradigm has not been as fully discussed as some of the other linguistic features that appear to be particular to English. Even among those more recent scholars who propose that it arose due to influence from Brythonic, there is little detailed discussion. A likely reason for this is that it is not a feature of Modern English and so does not grab the interest as much as other linguistic features such as *do*-periphrasis and the *be* + *-ing* construction. Nonetheless, there are several

explanations given for the existence of this linguistic feature. In this section, I outline the main direction explanations have taken that do not fall directly under the remit of the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis.

There are two main positions that can be taken to explain the dual paradigm's existence. The first is that the dual paradigm may have arisen independently due to internal forces in early English from the Indo-European roots directly inherited from Germanic, although I have not found anyone who specifically argues this position. The second position is that the dual paradigm was already present in West Germanic and so the various West Germanic tribes migrating to Britain brought them with them. Related to this position and indirectly linked to the Celtic Hypothesis is the theory that it arose in West Germanic due to influence from Continental Celtic before the Anglo-Saxons left the Continent, rather than arising in England due to influence from Brythonic. A more comprehensive theory would combine both positions and propose that these two paradigms existed independently in some of the West Germanic and the early Old English dialects. Following that it could be argued that, because the existence of two separate paradigms was unstable due to contact between the English dialects, this may have led to the dual paradigm through semantic divergence as a language-internal development.

#### *The dual paradigm as a language-internal development*

The first position, that the dual paradigm is an internal development, is plausible because the early English language was subject to many language-internal stresses. Although the state of the West Germanic languages and dialects carried to Britain during the mid-fifth century migrations cannot be observed in writing, several centuries later, as the earliest Old English writing to survive shows, there was still great variety in the forms of the verb 'be'. These centuries were a period of movement of people expanding into new areas of Britain and relocating within areas that had already been acquired, both of which promoted contact between different dialects of English. In this context of increased contact with a variety of forms of 'be' due to the different languages and dialects brought into Britain and the developing regional dialects of English, it is possible that people would have attributed meaning to the variation. In this way, the difference in form of the *\*es-/er-* and *\*bheu-* roots may have been assigned a difference in semantic value.

Internal development appears to be the default assumption; except when someone makes an argument for external motivation, the origin of the English dual paradigm of 'be' tends not to be discussed.

The second position, namely, that the dual paradigm may have been present in the West Germanic languages before the migrations to Britain, is not the only other possible explanation; however, it is the only other significant theory other than versions of the Celtic Hypothesis. This position receives indirect support from Schwartz (1951), who demonstrates that the North Sea Germanic languages, also known as the North-West or Ingvaemonic languages, were located in a transition zone between the North Germanic, Scandinavian languages and the more southerly Germanic languages that included Old High German, and so they shared features with both the northern and southern Germanic languages (1951: 196-8). The significance of North Sea Germanic being a transition zone is that it is an area in which linguistic isoglosses 'crisscross in an apparently unsystematic way' (Wardhaugh 1977: 224). The similarities North Sea Germanic shows with the North Germanic languages tend to be retained, inherited features (Schwarz 1951: 199); North Germanic and the older East Germanic Gothic, too, retained the copula on the *\*es-* root, for instance. By contrast, Old High German to the south of North Sea Germanic was innovative in several linguistic features (Schwarz 1951: 200). For instance, one innovation resulted in the present tense of *wesan* 'be' having *b-*forms in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> persons singular and plural, with forms from the *\*es-* root in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural.

Schwarz provides phonological, morphological and lexical evidence that shows the Old High German innovations were moving northwards into the region of the North Sea languages (1951: 200), and he shows that the individual innovations expanded into the different North Sea languages to different extents (1951: 201-14). Among these innovations, Schwarz mentions the different paradigms of the copula (1951: 197-8). Like North Germanic, the North Sea Germanic languages originally retained the *\*es-* copula, but the Old High German *b-*forms moved north into the transition zone, reaching some of the North Sea languages by the time of the migrations to Britain (Schwarz 1951: 197-8, 200). On the Continent, the innovation ousted the *\*es-* copula in some North Sea Germanic areas: in Old Saxon the copula took the Old High German copula in the form *bium*, *bist* etc. (Schwarz 1951: 198). This meant that the Old Saxon copula developed into a mixed paradigm in the present tense, like in Old High German (Schwarz 1951: 198).

Further evidence of the spread of the Old High German innovations can be seen in the most easily accessed Old Saxon text, the *Heliand* poem from around 840. According to König (1992: 57), the language of the *Heliand* shows some differences from the monumental evidence of the Old Saxon language, and these differences tend more towards the innovative Old High German. Lutz (2010: 113-4), too, considers the *Heliand*, along with the Old Saxon *Genesis*, to show features of a southern variety of Old Saxon, which she says probably has dialect mixing with Frankish and Old High German. However, she points out that one version of the *Heliand*, the Straubing fragment, does not show influence from the more southern dialects of West Germanic, but rather reflects the differences between the West Saxon and Anglian dialects of English (Lutz 2010: 114). It is in this context that Lutz discusses the dual

paradigm of ‘be’ in English, where she emphasizes the difference between Continental Old Saxon and English West Saxon (2010: 120).

In contrast with Old Saxon and other West Germanic languages that replaced some forms of ‘be’ with others, Old English both kept forms from the original West Germanic *\*es-* copula and accepted the innovative forms from the *\*bheu-* root without mixing them into the one paradigm. Anttila (1972: 298-9) explains that it is typical of a transition zone between major dialect boundaries to share features with both or all of the dialects it mediates. In this instance, the existence of the two forms in Old English indicates that the Anglo-Saxons and others migrated to Britain after the innovation had entered their languages but before it had a chance to oust the older forms. However, even within the various Anglo-Saxon dialects, the usage of the dual paradigm appears to have differed; Lutz (2009: 235) says the semantic distinction between the two paradigms was kept more rigorously in the South than the North. As we saw above at (7), the Lindisfarne gloss of the Gospels from the North of England, part of the area settled by the Angles, gives both present tense forms. This may reflect the different backgrounds of the English dialects, since Schwarz considers the Angles on the Continent to have been less influenced by the Old High German innovations than the other North Sea Germanic languages (1951: 228-9).

Schwarz’s explanation for why some, although perhaps not all, of the West Germanic languages or dialects that were carried to Britain during the fifth-century migration already had the makings of the Old English *bēon* and *wesan* paradigms is plausible on the basis of the Germanic evidence and the commonly observed characteristics of transition zones. However, the issue of why the different copulas came together to form the dual paradigm in the present tense of ‘be’ in Old English is not part of Schwarz’s investigation. He traces the movement of the forms through the Continental Germanic languages and is only incidentally interested in how the forms were separated into different paradigms. The importance of Schwarz’s discussion for my purposes is in showing that the first major migrations to Britain occurred at the period of transition in which forms from both the *\*es-* and the *\*bheu-* roots were present in the languages or dialects of the specific regions of the North-West coastal area from which the migrations set out. Time and place combined to ensure that the tribes migrating to Britain took both sets of forms with them before the forms stabilised into one standard paradigm as they did in the West Germanic languages left on the Continent.

### *Continental Celtic*

Why forms from both the *\*es-* and the *\*bheu-* roots were present in any of the West Germanic languages is not something Schwarz addresses apart from showing that it was an innovation in Old High Germanic that spread northwards. A common explanation for how the two forms entered West Germanic is that it was influenced by Continental Celtic, which also had forms from both roots and may also have had a dual paradigm, as Insular Celtic does. Schumacher (2007: 194-5), for instance, argues that the mixed, or ‘contaminated’, paradigms of ‘be’ in the West Germanic languages are due to contact with Celtic on the Continent. In

contrast with Schwarz's (1951) argument that the *b*-forms of Old High German replaced the original *\*es*- forms in Old Saxon, rather than forming a dual paradigm, Vennemann speaks as though the two paradigms were separate in West Germanic, but then reunified into a single paradigm (2016: 510), although he notes that whether or not there was 'a fully fledged second paradigm' is controversial (2016: 510 n. 1). If there had been a dual paradigm in West Germanic, it would be a particularly complicated history of the language for the dual paradigm to have later been lost in West Germanic, only for it to rise again in Old English due to Brythonic influence.

Whether or not some of the West Germanic languages had a dual paradigm, forms from the two roots *\*es*- and *\*bheu*- were clearly present. Influence from Continental Celtic sounds like a viable explanation. This does, however, address the question of why this influence occurred only in West Germanic, but not in the other Germanic language groups. Trudgill (2011: 299), for example, stresses the fact that the West Germanic languages had a copula with forms of the PIE *\*bheu*- root, while the North and East Germanic languages did not. A further question that needs consideration is why, given that forms based on the two roots existed in West Germanic, is there no evidence of the dual paradigm in the West Germanic languages on the Continent, when there was in Old English?

Both the Celtic and Germanic peoples had been migrating for a long period as they moved into Central and Western Europe, and they may have come into contact with each other at various periods. So it seems strange that until recently no satisfactory explanation has been offered to explain why it was only as the speakers of these languages became more settled in Western Europe that influence from Continental Celtic might have begun. Vennemann (2016) offers an explanation for the significant role the central western European region plays in language contact between Continental Celtic and West Germanic. It was here, he argues, that Continental Celtic first came into contact with pre-Indo-European Vasconic, the language group that includes Basque (2016: 510-11). He sets out from the observation that Basque, or Vasconic, and the Celtic languages both have two semantically differentiated present tense copula paradigms, as do, or did, all the western Romance languages (2016: 509). Since having a dual paradigm is not originally an Indo-European property, he argues, it must have arisen in Continental Celtic due to Vasconic influence (2016: 509-10). Both Vennemann (2016: 510) and Koch (2016: 468) suppose that the dual paradigm entered Celtic when large numbers of Vasconic speakers learnt proto-Celtic as a second language, leading to the imposition of Vasconic morpho-syntactic features. Regardless of the validity of Vennemann's Vasconic theory, it does appear that Proto-Celtic became differentiated from other Indo-European language groups somewhere in the central western region of Europe, probably in the Urnfield/Hallstatt region (N. K. Chadwick 1963c, Collis 2008: 45-8). The idea that Proto-Celtic was strongly affected by a non-Indo-European substratum in Europe is not itself a new idea, and it is claimed, for instance by Preusler (1938: 178, 90), himself an early proponent of the Celtic Hypothesis. While the question of how Proto-Celtic gained the dual paradigm is not directly relevant to the question of how Old English gained it, it does clarify Vennemann's explanation of how West Germanic may have gained it from Continental Celtic. After Continental Celtic adopted the dual paradigm due to Vasconic



influence, Vennemann suggests, it would have been taken to Britain with Insular Celtic, as well as being transferred to the West Germanic languages due to contact with Continental Celtic (2016: 510). The scenario he proposes is that speakers of early Continental Celtic would have been travelling westwards ahead of Germanic speakers, and so it was the Celts rather than the Germanic tribes that were directly influenced by Vasconic, and he argues that this scenario explains why Continental Celtic shows more of what he calls Vasconic features than West Germanic does (Vennemann 2016: 510).

Substantial language contact between speakers of Continental Celtic and Germanic is well attested. There is, for instance, historical evidence in Tacitus (*Germania* 28) that indicates a long period of contact between speakers of West Germanic languages and speakers of Continental Celtic in the northern, lower Rhine area. Caesar describes Germanic tribes living west of the Rhine among the Celtic Belgae tribe (*Bellum Gallicum* 2.4). There is good evidence that the Boii, a large Celtic tribe, was present in the central European region for several centuries. Specific contact situations with the Boii may be problematic to establish, since they effected large-scale migrations: sections of the tribe settled in the north of Italy (Polybius *The Histories* 2.17, Strabo *Geographica* 4.4) and the south of France; south of the Danube in the modern-day regions of Austria and Hungary (Strabo *Geographica* 7.2) and north of the Danube in Bavaria in the south of Germany (Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 1.5); and in Bohemia, their probable origin (Tacitus *Germania* 28). To support the historical accounts, there is archaeological evidence to show that there were large-scale Celtic settlements on both sides of the rivers Rhine and Danube dating from the late Hallstatt period (620–450 BC) and particularly from the La Tène period (450–1 BC): wide-spread and well-established farms, villages, and larger towns (Hubert 1999: 9-14, Kuckenburg 2004: 21-34, Scardigli 2002: 573-80). Clearly there was the possibility of long-term contact between the people speaking Germanic languages and Continental Celtic languages.

Preusler (1938: 182-3) states that it would have been in the southern region of Germany that the linguistic changes would have arisen, although he gives no example or reference for this. From a linguistic point of view, the clearest evidence for such language contact is lexical, since, as Schmidt (1965) says, there is little linguistic evidence for Continental Celtic other than lexical. Schmidt gives examples of river and mountain names along the Danube and Rhine that exist as doublets: there are both Celtic and Germanic forms of the toponyms (1965: 159-62). He also discusses the proportion of Celtic personal names among the Germanic tribes living to the west of the Rhine, which is higher to the south than to the north: 32% of the personal names are Celtic near the Mosel, but only 16.5% further north near the Meuse (1965: 157). While Celtic personal names are not directly linked to the language the person speaks, the presence of a significant proportion of them indicates cultural contact and may indirectly indicate language contact. This greater strength of Celtic influence on personal and geographical names in the more southern West Germanic territory parallels the greater linguistic influence proposed by Preusler (1938), Schwarz (1951) and Lutz (2010) as coming from the more southern of the West Germanic dialects, Old High German, through Frankish into the North Sea Germanic dialects.

If we take it as possible that Continental Celtic encouraged the existence of the two forms in the southern West Germanic languages, and that the influence then spread north through the other West Germanic languages, this still does not explain why the two roots were combined into a single mixed paradigm on the Continent but then diverged as a dual paradigm in Britain. Vennemann suggests that Insular Celtic influenced early English in giving rise to the dual paradigm of ‘be’ or that, if it was already present in the West Germanic languages taken to Britain, Insular Celtic strengthened its use in Old English (2016: 510). He does, indeed, consider, in another paper, the possibility that there were two distinct copular paradigms in the continental West Germanic languages as well, but admits there is no evidence that this was the case (Vennemann 2013: 299-308). Although his argument here is not focused on the Celtic Hypothesis, Vennemann is elsewhere an important proponent of the Celtic Hypothesis.

In the next section, I focus on the Celtic Hypothesis that the dual paradigm in Old English can only be explained as arising, or possibly being retained, through language contact with Brythonic, which not only had parallel forms from the Indo-European *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* copulas, but also had them neatly separated into a dual paradigm with a semantic distinction between the two forms.

### Section 3: The Celtic Hypothesis

The Celtic Hypothesis for the existence of the dual paradigm of ‘be’ in Old English is that it was due to Celtic influence, specifically Brythonic Celtic influence that occurred after the arrival in Britain of the Anglo-Saxons and the other Germanic tribes accompanying them. There are two versions of the hypothesis: the strong version is that Brythonic influence led to the existence of the dual paradigm, in other words, that it would not have existed in Old English if not for Brythonic influence; and the weak version, that the dual paradigm was retained or strengthened due to such influence. Neither version has been argued in as much detail by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis as it has been for some other linguistic features. As I mentioned at the beginning of the previous section, the dual paradigm may not come to people’s attention as much as other linguistic features, since it no longer exists in Modern English. This situation was also initially exacerbated by the lack of scholarly attention to the observations and arguments of the earliest proponents of Brythonic influence on the early English dual paradigm. Even in the more recent works on the Celtic Hypothesis, it continues to be under-represented, not least because it is not discussed at any length by some of the main proponents, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008) or in their other works, or in the works written or edited by Tristram, for instance, in her *Celtic Englishes* volumes (1997a, 2000, 2003, 2006). The most detail discussions are the ones by Keller (1925) and Lutz (2009, 2010), although the feature is mentioned briefly by many others.

The parallel between 3<sup>rd</sup> person singulars Old English *bið* ‘be’ and Celtic *byð* ‘be’ was noted early by Keller (1925: 56-60). He begins by pointing out that it is only English of the Germanic languages that has full paradigms for the verb ‘be’ on the two inherited roots *\*bheu-* and *\*es-* in the present tense, and that they are clearly distinguished in meaning (1925:

56). He elaborates by explaining that Gothic and Old Norse did not have forms from *\*bheu-*, while Old Saxon, Old High German and Frisian had one paradigm that combined both stems, and they differed in which persons and numbers had which stem (1925: 56-7). Furthermore, he points out, only Old English had a subjunctive mood on the *\*bheu-* root, *bēo*, *bēon* alongside the Indo-European subjunctive *sī*, *sīen* as well as the imperative *bēo*, *bēop* alongside the older *wes*, *wesap* (Keller 1925: 57). He also points out that Welsh also has forms in the ‘generelles Imperfekt’ (called the ‘Consuetudinal Past’ by Evans (1964: 59)), the Preterite, the Pluperfect and the ‘Perfekt-Konjunktiv’ (called the ‘Imperfect Subjunctive’ by Evans (1964: 59)) from the *\*bheu* root. These points have, of course, been discussed by others, as I outlined in the previous section.

Where Keller differs from other early discussions of the dual paradigm is that he stresses the similarity in form and function between the dual paradigm of ‘be’ in Old English and that in the Celtic languages Welsh, Cornish, Breton and Old Irish (1925: 58-60). As being the closest parallel to Old English, he contrasts the Welsh forms and meanings of what he calls the perfective (concrete) present *wyf* with the imperfective (general, habitual) present or future *byddaf*,<sup>9</sup> and he points out that Welsh also continues this second parallel stem in its subjunctive *bwyf* and its imperative *bydd* (Keller 1925: 58-9). To clarify these parallels, I set the two standardised Old English paradigms from Campbell (1959: 349) alongside the two Welsh ones from Evans (1964: 136-7), ignoring most variant spellings given by them, in Tables 3.7 and 3.8.

	Old English <i>wesan</i>	Middle Welsh <i>bot</i>
<i>Present Indicative</i>		
Singular 1	eom	wyf
2	eart	wyt
3	is	yw/oes
Plural 1	sindon/sint	ym
2	sindon/sint	ywch
3	sindon/sint	ynt
<i>Present Subjunctive</i>		
Singular	sīe	[None on this stem]
Plural	sīen	
<i>Imperative</i>		
	[None on this stem]	[None on this stem]

Table 3.7: The forms of Old English (West Saxon) and Middle Welsh ‘be’ formed from PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>es-*

<sup>9</sup> In Middle Welsh orthography *d* often represents the voiced fricative /ð/, which is spelled *dd* in Modern Welsh. Jackson (1953: 347-51) explains that intervocalic *-s-* became *-j-* and then *-ð-* following *e/i*, so British *\*bĵāmi* > Welsh *bydaf*, Cornish *bethaf* and Middle Breton *bezaff*.

	Old English <i>bēon</i>	Middle Welsh <i>bot</i>
	<i>Present Indicative</i>	<i>Consuetudinal Present/Future</i>
Singular 1	bēo	bydaf
2	bist	bydy
3	biþ	byd
Plural 1	bēoþ	bydwn
2	bēoþ	bydwch
3	bēoþ	bydant/bint
<i>Present Subjunctive</i>		
Singular 1	bēo	bwyf
2	bēo	bych/bwyr
3	bēo	bo/boet
Plural 1	bēon	bom
2	bēon	boch
3	bēon	bont/boent
<i>Imperative</i>		
Singular 1	bēo	-
2	bēo	byd
3	bēo	bit/boet
Plural 1	bēoþ	bydwn
2	bēoþ	bydwch
3	bēoþ	bydant/bint

Table 3.8: The forms of Old English (West Saxon) and Middle Welsh ‘be’ formed from PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>uh<sub>2</sub>-*

Of more importance than the formal parallel, according to Keller, is the parallel in the syntactic function that aligns Old English more closely with all the Celtic languages than to other West Germanic languages in making a distinction between the perfective and imperfective Aktionsart of the copula (1925: 59). He concludes that the Old English forms based on the root *\*bheu-* arose due to the speech habits of Brythonic speakers when they spoke English imperfectly (Keller 1925: 60), a conclusion that is compatible with modern theories of language change due to second-language acquisition in contact situations.

This explanation that the dual paradigm in Old English was due to influence from Insular Celtic languages was left to rest until Tolkien raised it in his 1955 O’Donnell lecture. In the published version of the lecture, Tolkien (1963: 31 n.2) notes that the Irish, Welsh and Old English 3<sup>rd</sup> singular forms of the *bēon* stem relate to the older stem *bī*, *bij*, which he also relates to Latin *fit*s, *fit* etc. As part of his demonstration of the parallel between the Old English and the Celtic dual paradigms, Tolkien refers to the short vowel of the Old English 3<sup>rd</sup> singular form *bið* and the regional Northumbrian 3<sup>rd</sup> plural forms *biðun*/*bioðun* as showing distinctive forms that cannot be adequately explained without adducing Celtic influence (1963: 31-2).

Tolkien, as a highly respected Anglo-Saxonist, validated the idea of Brythonic influence on early English within the English-speaking academic community, and the Celtic Hypothesis began to gain some attention after that. However, further discussion of the dual paradigm of ‘be’ has been limited. For instance, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008) devote only a few pages to it: they describe the early English dual paradigm as ‘a putative early structural loan’ (2008: 40), which they consider ‘more than likely’ to be the result of contact with Brythonic

(2008: 42); otherwise, they consider it a possible reinforcement of an existing English feature (2008: 169). They present tables of the Middle Welsh Consuetudinal Present and Future from Morris-Jones (1913) and Strachan (1909). Beyond this, the dual paradigm is not a linguistic feature of interest to them, since their book aims to shed light on the outcomes of the initial contact situation by analysing the outcomes of recent language contacts and the modern Celtic Englishes. Having died out in the Middle English period, the dual paradigm cannot be investigated in the modern varieties of English.

Lutz (2009: 231-8) takes up two of Tolkien's (1963) points, including his argument that contact with Brythonic influenced the dual paradigm of 'be'. After summarising the similarities between the dual paradigms of the two languages and discussing Keller's (1925) hypothesis, she analyses what she sees as the weaknesses of recent studies that criticise Keller's arguments. She rejects Schumacher's (2007) criticism that Keller had ignored the *b*-forms in Old Saxon and Old High German, explaining that Keller's argument was that it was only in Britain that the two paradigms were separated and held separate functions (Lutz 2009: 236-8). For the same reason, she rejects Flasdieck's (1937) and Laker's (2008) criticism of Keller (Lutz 2009: 236). Although Lutz does not present new evidence or advance the argument beyond the stage reached by Keller, she brings the Celtic Hypothesis for this linguistic feature forward into the current scope of discussion.

Laker (2008), however, brings criticism to bear on Lutz's (2009) own paper, which he presumably read or heard before publication. Like Schumacher (2007: 194-5), whose position I described in the previous section, Laker argues that the mixed paradigms on the *\*es*- and *\*bheu*- roots in the West Germanic languages is evidence that there were two paradigms on the Continent (2008: 28-9). Because of this, he says, the dual paradigm in Old English 'may have been preserved' by contact with Brythonic or British Latin, 'rather than created' (2008: 29). His specific criticism of Keller and Lutz is that they present the typological parallel between Old English and Middle Welsh without analysing it or discussing the parallel in the other West Germanic languages (Laker 2008: 28-9). This is valid criticism, not only of Keller and Lutz, but of most of the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis with regard to the dual paradigm.

Vennemann (2013: 300-1) steps in to resolve the conflicting opinions of Schumacher (2007) and Lutz (2009) with the observation that the dual paradigm is present in Old English, on the grounds that it was already present in the earlier forms of the language on the Continent. He argues that, when the influence from Continental Celtic was reduced, the dual paradigm was conflated in the remaining West Germanic languages; when the influence from Insular Celtic was reduced, the dual paradigm was conflated in English, too (2013: 300).

## Part 2: The evaluation

### Section 4: Brythonic evidence

#### *Forms of the verb in Celtic*

Keller (1925: 58) not only discusses the present and future meanings of the Middle Welsh *bydaf* paradigm as the parallel with Old English *bēon*, but also notes that this distinction existed in Middle Cornish *bethaff* ‘be’ and Middle Breton *bezaff* ‘be’. Furthermore, as part of his desire to establish the pattern of the verb’s form as a pan-Celtic feature, he draws attention to the fact that it also existed in Gaelic. He points out there was the same distinction in Old Irish between the Consuetudinal or Iterative Present with present or future meaning from the *\*bheu* root and a perfective Present on the *\*sta-* root, for instance 3<sup>rd</sup> singular *a-tá*, while the Future is a secondary development (Keller 1925: 59-60). His table of Old Irish forms from the *\*bheu* root show its similarity with the Middle Welsh forms (1925: 60), although Keller only discusses the Old Irish verbs based on the roots *\*bheu-* for the Consuetudinal or Iterative Present and *\*sta-* for the Present, ignoring the *\*es-* root in Old Irish. By contrast, Bisagni (2012: 1) contrasts the Old Irish forms from not only the PIE roots *\*b<sup>h</sup>weh<sub>2</sub>-* for the ‘consuetudinal verb’ and *\*steh<sub>2</sub>-* for the substantive verb, but also *\*h<sub>1</sub>es-* for the copula, all three of which contrast in the present indicative. Bisagni draws a parallel with the Spanish copula *ser* from Latin *esse* ‘to be’ and the substantive verb *estar* from Latin *stare* ‘to stand’ (2012: 1), themselves from the PIE roots *\*h<sub>1</sub>es-* and *\*steh<sub>2</sub>-* respectively. While English and Welsh are also able to convey the copular and substantive functions of ‘be’, they do not usually do so by means of different forms of the verb, but rather the semantic context determines which function the verb performs (Cf. D. S. Evans 1964: 139 n.2). It should be noted that the copula may be omitted in Middle Welsh when a temporal reference is not required and this is found in early poetry, gnomes and proverbs (D. S. Evans 1964: 140 n. 4). Occasionally in Middle Welsh and regularly in Modern South Welsh the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present form *taw* is used, and this is the only Welsh form of the verb that is cognate with Irish substantive verb *-tá* from PIE *\*steh<sub>2</sub>-* through *\*sthā-* (D. S. Evans 1964: 144 n.). In addition to the distinction between the three roots, Old Irish also made a distinction within the copula between the absolute and the conjunct forms<sup>10</sup> (Bisagni 2012: 3), although this was already archaic by the time of Middle Welsh and the other Brythonic languages (D. S. Evans 1964: 118-9, Rodway 2002, 2013: 85-115). The existence of the several paradigms for ‘be’ in Old Irish indirectly supports the theory that Continental Celtic had a dual paradigm for ‘be’. The discussion of the Old Irish verb ‘be’ fills out some of the obscurity of the earliest period of the Brythonic language. However, it is clearly not a simple parallel with Middle Welsh *bot*, and I shall not say more about it here.

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<sup>10</sup> The absolute forms are the independent forms of a verb and the conjunct forms are used after certain particles such as negative or relative particles (Russell 1995: 126, Thurneysen 1993: 350). Morris-Jones (1913: 331-2) prefers the term ‘injunctive’ for dependent forms, and he explains they have the equivalent of the Greek secondary endings.

Already by Old Welsh, the distinctions between the substantive verb and the copula and between the absolute and conjunct forms had been reduced except in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present indicative, according to Zimmer (1999: 547). As Evans (1964: 118-9) explains, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> persons singular and plural of (all) verbs kept the absolute form, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural mostly kept the conjunct forms with some archaic examples of the absolute forms. As far as Middle Welsh *bot* ‘be’ is concerned, the form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural in the simple Present indicative is often determined by the syntax of the sentence, particularly constituent order and the type of subject (D. S. Evans 1964: 139-44). To see what the situation was in early Welsh in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural, Present indicative and Present subjunctive of *bot* ‘be’, I combine the Old Welsh forms presented by Zimmer (1999) and the Middle Welsh presented by Evans (1964: 52-3, 63, 136-45), in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person only – the only person given by Zimmer for Old Welsh except for one exception – and presenting the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* roots separately in Tables 3.9 and 3.10. Mostly Zimmer and Evans overlap but sometimes they disagree with each other, for instance in proposed stages in the etymologies of some forms. Both Zimmer and Evans give forms in other tenses, moods and aspects, but these are not relevant for establishing the proposed model for the early English dual paradigm in the present tense. I supply cognates to clarify how the Celtic forms fit into the Indo-European context.

	Proto-IE	Proto-Celtic	Old Welsh	Middle Welsh	Modern Welsh	Cognates
<i>Present indicative</i>						
3 singular	*esti	*essi (absolute)	is(s)	ys	o-s/s-ef	Latin <i>est</i>
	*esti	*est>*ésu (copula)	-oi/-iu	(ytt)iw/(yd)iw	(yd)yw/ydy	
	*esti	*n’ita esti (negative substantive)	nit-ois	ois/oes	oes	
	*esti	*ita esti (positive substantive)	is-sit	ys-sit		
3 plural	*senti	*henti (copula)	(h)int	ynt	ŷnt/ydyn(t)	Latin <i>sunt</i>
<i>Present subjunctive</i>						
[Not on this stem]						

Table 3.9: The Proto-Indo-European roots of the Welsh Present Indicative of *bot/bod* ‘be’ in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person

	Proto-Celtic	Old Welsh	Middle Welsh	Modern Welsh	Cognates
<i>Present indicative</i>					
3 singular	*b <sub>ji</sub> >*b <sup>h</sup> <sub>u</sub> H- <sub>ji</sub> e-ti> *b <sub>ji</sub> eti>*b <sub>i</sub> ti (iterative)	bid	byd/bit	bydd	Latin <i>fit</i>
3 plural		[no example]	bydant/bidan/ bydawnt/bint	byddan(t)	Latin <i>fiunt</i>
<i>Present subjunctive</i>					
3 singular		boi/boit/bo	bo/boet	bo/byddo	Greek φηῖ
3 plural		[no example]	boent/bwynt	bônt/byddont	Grk φηῶσι

Table 3.10: The 3<sup>rd</sup> person forms of the Old and Middle Welsh Consuetudinal Present/Future Indicative and Subjunctive of *bot* ‘be’

Notes for Tables 3.9 and 3.10: Brackets indicate optional parts of variants and hyphens separate a form of the verb from an additional element. Some variants are not shown, and forms are not supplied where Zimmer and Evans do not provide them.

It is clear that the forms in the two paradigms in Old Welsh and in Old Irish go back to proto-Celtic and beyond to the reconstructed roots of Proto-Indo-European. As I said in Section 2, these roots may have been inherited by the Germanic languages, too. If, as is also possible, the Germanic languages did not inherit the *\*bheu-* root as a separate paradigm, or they abandoned it by the time of the earliest written texts, another possibility I mentioned was that the West Germanic languages developed a suppletive present tense paradigm – I ignore for the moment the suppletion in other tenses – because of influence from Continental Celtic.

However, if Brythonic Celtic had an important role in the origin or maintenance of the dual paradigm in Old English, as I discuss in Section 3, it is important to try to establish what the status of the dual paradigm was, not only for Old Welsh, but for early Cornish and Breton as well. Welsh is often taken as representative of the variety of the Brythonic language the Old English speakers first encountered, but it was not necessarily so. Several regional varieties can be identified. For instance, a typical division of the regional varieties is presented by Schrijver (1995), who classifies Cornish and Breton as Southwestern Brittonic languages and contrasts them with Cumbric and Welsh, which he calls Western Brittonic, separating Welsh from Southwestern Brittonic on phonological grounds. By contrast, Russell (1995: 134) prefers to see a continuum from Scotland to Cornwall and Brittany, with the variety in Wales sharing some features with the northern varieties and some with the southern. However, it seems that the modern division between North Welsh and South Welsh has a long history, and it may be that North Welsh was linguistically closer to Cumbric and the language of the north of England than it was to South Welsh. Early Welsh literature may substantiate the cultural conditions that would support this division. For instance, the places and tribes mentioned in the early poem *Y Gododdin* by Aneirin range from Edinburgh and Strathclyde in the North to the north of Wales. The early praise poetry of Taliesin is located within the central part of this region. So the variety of Brythonic encountered by the early Anglo-Saxons in Northumbria could have been similar to the Old Welsh forms of these early poems. In contrast with this, the variety of Brythonic encountered by the West Saxons may have been closer to something between Old Cornish and an early form of South Welsh than to the Old Welsh of the northern poems. What the Brythonic variety spoken in the South-East, the southern part of Schrijver's Eastern Brittonic, was like when the Anglo-Saxons first staged their large-scale invasions is impossible to determine without extrapolating from the evidence available from the Brythonic varieties on the outer rim of the Old English-speaking areas. This means that we can only have a general knowledge of the variety of Brythonic spoken at the crucial locus of rapid, large-scale second-language learning. It is this type of language contact scenario that modern theory suggests may lead to greater imposition of linguistic features on the target language than would typically occur with other types of language contact.

### *Forms of the verb in Brythonic*

To gain a clearer view of the Western and South-Western Brythonic continuum, Table 3.11 shows that the dual paradigm was present in the main Brythonic languages: Middle Welsh



(D. S. Evans 1964: 136-8), Middle Cornish (Zimmer's trans. of H. Lewis 1990: 55-7), and Middle Breton (Hemon 1975: §139, H. Lewis & Pedersen 1937: §477-85). In the present indicative, the verbs may have the prefix *yd-* in Welsh, *ass-* in Cornish and *ed-* in Breton, but I omit these for reasons of space. I do not include impersonal forms. To show how they compare with Old English, I include Campbell's (1959: 349) Old English forms.

	Middle Welsh <i>bot</i>	Middle Cornish <i>bos</i>	Middle Breton <i>bezañ</i>	Old English <i>wesan/bēon</i>
<i>Present indicative</i>				
Singular 1	wyf	of(f)/esof/eseff	o(u)ff/o(u)n	eam/North. am
2	wyt	o(y)s/esos/eses	out/ous	eart
3	yw; mae; oes	yw/ew/vsy/vgy/ese; (y)ma/ymma/me; vs/e(v)s/ues/uys	eo/e(o)u/é/eux eus/è/so/zo(u)	is
Plural 1	ym	(es)on/esen	o(u)mp/omb	sindon/sint
2	ywch	(es)o(u)gh/ysough	o(u)ch/o(u)c'h	sindon/sint
3	ynt, maen(t)	yns/vsons; y mons/y myens	int/ynt	sindon/sint
<i>Consuetudinal Present/Future and Habitual/Iterative Indicative</i>				
Singular 1	bydaf	bethaf	bezaff/besan/bezan	bēo
2	bydy	bethyth/betheth	bezez	bist
3	byd	beth/b(e)yth/	bez/be	biþ
Plural 1	bydwn	bethyn	bezomp/beamp	bēoþ/Nth. aron
2	bydwch	beth(e)ugh/bethogh	bezit/beset	bēoþ/Nth. aron
3	bydan(t)/bint	bethons	bezont/besont	bēoþ/Nth. aron/bi(o)ðun
<i>Present subjunctive or conditional (only on the *bheu- root in Brythonic)</i>				
Singular 1	bwyf	b(e)yf/beu	benn; behen/befen	bēo
2	bych	b(e)y	bez/bes; behès/befès	bēo
3	bo/boet	bo	be; behé/befe/bihay	bēo
Plural 1	bom	byyn/beyn	bemp; behemb/befemp/ bezzemp	bēon
2	boch	b(y)ugh/be(u)gh	bech/beach/beoh; beheoh/befec'h	bēon
3	bon(t)/bwynt	bons/byns	bent/ behènt/befent	bēon
<i>Future Indicative (in Breton only)<sup>11</sup></i>				
Singular 1			beziff/biziff/bizin/bin	
2			bezy/bizy/bezi/bizi/bi	
3			bezo(u)/beso/bo(u)	
Plural 1			behomp/bezomp/befomp/ bezimp/bi(z)imp	
2			bizhyt/bezot/bihet/bi(h)ot/ besot/bioc'h/bezoc'h	
3			bez(h)ont/bezint/bo(u)int/ b(a)int	

Table 3.11: Brythonic and Old English dual 'be' paradigms (part)

It is clear that the dual paradigm of 'be' in Middle Welsh, Middle Cornish and Middle Breton shows a continuation from the two paradigms in Proto-Celtic. This is compatible with a

<sup>11</sup> Lewis and Pedersen (1937: §477-85) call this the present subjunctive, while Hemon (1975: 187) calls it the future indicative and gives a different form for the present subjunctive.

scenario in which the two paradigms were taken from the Continent with Insular Celtic, while possibly also influencing the forms of West Germanic on the Continent.

In contrast with the unity and continuity of the dual paradigm in Brythonic, in some respects the Brythonic dual paradigm differs significantly from the Old English one. For instance, the only forms in the Old English dual paradigm that are assumed to be more likely to have been influenced by Brythonic rather than inherited from West Germanic are the 3<sup>rd</sup> persons singular and plural, since in Old High German and Old Saxon, for instance, the 3<sup>rd</sup> persons singular and plural were formed from the *\*es-* root. In particular, as I said above, Tolkien argues that the Old English 3<sup>rd</sup> singular form *bið* and the regional Northumbrian 3<sup>rd</sup> plural forms *biðun/bioðun* cannot be adequately explained without assuming Celtic influence, on the grounds that they have a short *-i-* in the stem as in the early Brythonic forms (1963: 31-2).<sup>12</sup>

However, Ringe (2006: 196) claims that the short *-i-* of the perfective present stem *\*bi-* is a feature of the West Germanic languages. This means that, even in those rare cases where Brythonic influence is claimed definitely to have influenced the form of the *bēon* half of the dual paradigm, the Old English forms could just as well have been inherited from West Germanic forms. Furthermore, the Brythonic and Old English dual paradigms do not cover the same tense/mood/aspect combinations. In Middle Welsh, for instance, not only is there a dual paradigm comprising the Present and Consuetudinal Present/Future, but the distinction continues into the past with the dual paradigm of the Imperfect and the Consuetudinal Past. In Old English, by contrast, the dual paradigm has no distinction in the past tense and neither of the roots of the present tense are used in the past. On the other hand, Old English continues the dual paradigm into the Present subjunctive and the Imperative, while Middle Welsh has only the *\*bheu-* root for these. This lack of parallel in range may weaken the Celtic Hypothesis as far as the similarity in form is concerned.

Since the parallel in form between the Brythonic and Old English dual paradigms is not as significant as it is sometimes made out to be, some other parallel will have to be found to give the Celtic Hypothesis more convincing evidence. To evaluate the strength of Brythonic's involvement in the origin of Old English's dual paradigm, an analysis of the semantic distinction between the forms in Brythonic may present a clearer understanding of the model proposed for Old English.

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<sup>12</sup> Although Middle Welsh *byd* /bi:ð/, being a monosyllable followed by a single consonant, developed a long vowel by the second half of the sixth century (Jackson 1953: 338-41), Schrijver (1995: 292) explains an earlier development of the vowel from (pre-Celtic *\*b<sup>h</sup>ī-* >) Celtic *\*b<sup>h</sup>ī-* to Brythonic *\*b<sup>h</sup>ī-* as shortening in hiatus when followed by the present tense suffix *\*-je/o-*. It is presumably during this earlier stage that Tolkien suggests Old English *bið* gained its short vowel due to contact with Brythonic.

*The semantic distinction between the two paradigms in Brythonic*

To analyse this semantic distinction, I considered the meaning and time reference of the Present indicative and Consuetudinal Present/Future indicative forms in the passages I selected from Middle Welsh texts. It is a significant weakness in the arguments for the Celtic Hypothesis that its proponents provide examples of a linguistic feature without giving an indication of how representative the examples are. By looking at every instance in each of the passages, I am able to indicate how frequently the forms from the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* roots occur in these particular texts and what the semantic distinctions between the roots seems to be. I provide examples below according to how representative they are of the general pattern of usage, with a few others that appear to diverge significantly from the pattern.

The following examples from Middle Welsh literary prose narrative show that the simple Present indicative (PRES) can express a state that is true at present time (11, 12), including performing the basic function of identification (13, 14, 15), and it can possibly also express future time of the appointment seen from the point of view of the present time (16):

- (11) *py drwc yssyd arnat ti?*  
what bad **be-3SG.PRES** on.you you  
‘what is wrong with you?’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 454, lines 54)

- (12) *kenhadeu Arthur yssyd yma yn erchi Olwenn*  
messengers Arthur **be-3SG.PRES** here PT seek Olwen  
‘Arthur’s messengers are here to seek Olwen’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 473, lines 437-8)

- (13) *Arthur yssyd geuynderw it*  
Arthur **be-3SG.PRES** cousin to.you  
‘Arthur is your cousin’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 454, lines 57-8)

- (14) *ac a dywedy di y mi pwy wyt?*  
and PT tell you to me who **be-2SG.PRES**  
‘and will you tell me who you are?’

(*Pwyll* lines 283-4)

- (15) *ys mi a 'e heirch*  
**be-3SG.PRES** I who her seek  
‘I am the one seeking her’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 479, line 566)

- (16) blwydyn ... y heno y **mae** oet y rof i ac ef ar y ryt  
 year to tonight PT **be-3SG.PRES** tryst PT between I and him at the ford  
 ‘a year from tonight there is a meeting between him and me at the ford’  
 (*Pwyll* lines 60-1)

The Consuetudinal Present/Future indicative (CONSPF) frequently has a clear future sense as the following examples (17, 18, 19) show, with (20, 21) providing a good contrast with the simple Present:

- (17) marw **uydaf** i o'r cleuyt hwnn  
 die **be-1SG.CONSPF** I of the illness this  
 ‘I am going to die of this illness’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 452, line 16)
- (18) yuory [...] **bydhawt** ragot ti gyntaf yd agorawr y porth  
 tomorrow **be-3SG.CONSPF** because.of you first PT open the door  
 ‘tomorrow the door will be opened for you first’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 456, lines 98-100)
- (19) Pryderi ... **uyd** y enw ef  
 Pryderi **be-3SG.CONSPF** his name his  
 ‘his name will be Pryderi’  
 (*Pwyll* lines 620-1)
- (20) mi hagen a **uydaf** gyuarwyd ywch hyt lle y **mae**  
 I but PT **be-1SG.CONSPF** guide to.you until where PT **be-3SG.PRES**  
 ‘but I shall be your guide to where he is’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* RB 836, lines 899-900)
- (21) ac yn ouyn ni **yw** na **byd** it etiued o 'r wife  
 and our fear our **be-3SG.PRES** not **be-1SG.CONSPF** to.you heir from the wreic  
**yssyd** gennyt  
**be-3SG.PRES** with.you  
 ‘and our fear is that you will not have an heir from your (current) wife’  
 (*Pwyll* lines 453-4)

The Consuetudinal Present/Future can also be used with a present sense, without having any particular gnomic or timeless sense to it, as examples (22,<sup>13</sup> 23) show, and it also occurs within a past setting although with a future sense as is usual after *yny* ‘until’ (24) and with a past sense with *ual* ‘as’ where an imperfect might be expected (25):

<sup>13</sup> Example (22) has a habitual sense, but the present time is clearly meant.

- (22) mi a **uydaf** porthawr y Arthur pob dyw kalan Ionawr  
 I PT **be-1SG.CONSPF** gatekeeper the Arthur every day first.of.month January  
 ‘I am Arthur’s gatekeeper every New Year’s Day’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* WB 456, lines 83-4)
- (23) ni a wdom na **bydy** gyuoet ti a rei o wyr y wlat honn  
 we PT know not **be-2SG.CONSPF** as.old you as some of men the country this  
 ‘we know that you are not as old as some of the men in this country’  
 (*Pwyll* line 453)
- (24) yny **uyd** kwynuan a griduan a glywynt  
 until **be-3SG.CONSPF** mourning and moaning which hear-3PL.IMPF  
 ‘until they could hear mourning and moaning’ (literally, ‘until it will be mourning and  
 moaning they were hearing’) (*Culhwch ac Olwen* RB 836,  
 lines 911-2)
- (25) ac ual y **byd** yn llithiau y cwn, ef a welei uarchauc yn dyuot  
 and as PT **be-3SG.CONSPF** PT feed the dogs he PT saw rider PT come  
 ‘and as he was feeding/started to feed the dogs, he saw a rider coming’  
 (*Pwyll* line 453)

Overall, in the passages I analysed in the prose narrative *Culhwch ac Olwen* (lines 1-200, 374-600, 751-952, 1057-1246, giving a total of 819 lines), all of the 116 instances of the simple Present Indicative referred to present time. Of the ten instances of the Consuetudinal Present/Future in the same passages, eight clearly refer to the future, one to the present (22) and one to the past (25), although in this last case an iterative or ingressive aspect might be more salient than the tense. Not only is the tense/mood/aspect reference of the Consuetudinal Present/Future variable, but its frequency of use is minor compared with the simple Present. Table 3.12 below summarises these and the following figures.

In the passages of the prose narrative *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* I analysed (lines 1-100, 201-300, 401-500, 601-654, giving a total of 354 lines), there are 50 instances of the simple Present and 19 instances of the Consuetudinal Present/Future. Again, the frequency of the simple Present is well ahead of that of the Consuetudinal Present/Future, although not to the same extent as in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. Of the 50 examples of the simple Present, all but one refer to the present, and that one may refer to either present or future time (16) depending on whether the meeting is thought of as occurring in the future or being currently arranged. Of the 19 examples of the Consuetudinal Present/Future, 16 clearly refer to the future, one to the present (22) and two to the past, one of which is shown at (25).

I also analysed the historical prose text *Brut y Tywysogyon* (T. Jones 1955) between the years 680 and 1100 (inclusive). This work is a translation of a Latin chronicle; as Patricia Williams (2012) indicates, Middle Welsh historical prose texts are either translations of Latin originals or adaptations of them. The fact that this particular text is a translation into Welsh rather than

originally having been written in Welsh has no bearing on its use of the present indicative forms of *bot* ‘be’, since all the entries in the chronicle refer to past time and there are no examples from either the *wyf* or *bydaf* Present or Consuetudinal Present/Future Indicative paradigms.

By contrast with the high relative frequency of the simple Present in the prose narratives *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, the ratio of simple Present to Consuetudinal Present/Future in the prophetic poem *Armes Prydein* is five (possibly seven) to 14. There is a simple explanation for this: the poem is the prophecy of a great battle between a united army of Britons and Goidels against the Anglo-Saxons in which the Celtic tribes are going to be victorious. Most of the poem describes the future battle and here, too, the Consuetudinal Present/Future forms refer to the future, probably in all 14 examples, for instance (26, 27), unless one refers to the present (28). The simple Present refers to the present time of the prophecy being given (29), the questions that will be asked of the Anglo-Saxons referring to their present time (30), and the enduring (gnomic) existence of God (31). The two examples I am uncertain of tallying as simple Presents contain a word that I am not sure is a form of *bot*; since the two examples contain the same word, I give only the first of the two (32):

- (26) **atvi**                      peleitral              dyfal      dillyd  
**be-3SG.CONSPF** spear-throwing endless flow  
‘there will be a spear-throwing and endless flow (of blood)’  
(Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 115; 10<sup>th</sup> century)
- (27) **o**      Vynaw hyt Lydaw yn eu llaw yt **vyd**  
from Manaw until Lydaw in their hand PT **be-3SG.CONSPF**  
‘from Manaw to Lydaw will be in their hands’  
(Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 172; 10<sup>th</sup> century)
- (28) **ny** wyr kud ymda cwd a cwd **vyd**  
not know where wander where go where **be-3SG.CONSPF**  
‘do not know where they wander, where they go, where they are/will be’  
(Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 112; 10<sup>th</sup> century)
- (29) **yssyd**                      wr dylyedawc a lefeir hyn  
**be-3SG.PRES** man noble              who says this  
‘it is a noble man who says this’  
(Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 23; 10<sup>th</sup> century)
- (30) **cw**      **mae**                      eu kendloed py vro pan doethant  
where **be-3SG.PRES** their kin              which territory when they.went  
‘where is their kin, which territory did they leave’  
(Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 136; 10<sup>th</sup> century)

- (31) am Duw **yssyd**, ny threinc ny dieinc nyt ardispyd  
 for God **be-3SG.PRES** not die not depart not depleted  
 ‘for God Who is, does not die, is not absent, is not depleted’  
 (Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 197-8; 10<sup>th</sup> century)

- (32) nys arhaedwy neb nys **dioes** dayar  
 not.for.them receive no-one not.for.them **be-3SG.PRES?** land  
 ‘no one will receive them, there is no land for them’  
 (Anonymous *Armes Prydein* 29; 10<sup>th</sup> century)

In the 431 lines of the twelve Taliesin praise poems (I. Williams 1968) I analysed and the 131 lines of five anonymous poems I chose from Parry’s (1962) selection – I discuss Jacobs’s (2012) selection below – there are 92 examples of *bot* and there is a similar preponderance of simple Present indicative forms with 47 instances over the Consuetudinal Present/Future, which has only 12 instances. As I found with the literary prose narratives, while the Present is used for present time and gnomic statements, the time reference for the Consuetudinal Present/Future is less surely identified but is predominantly used for future time. In the poems, too, the simple Present can express a state that is true at present time (33, 34), a state that is true in the present and may well continue (35) and may also have a gnomic sense (36):

- (33) a ddodynt yng ngwystlon? a **ŷnt** parawd?  
 PT come my hostages PT **be-3PL.PRES** ready  
 ‘have my hostages come? are they ready?’  
 (Taliesin, *Gwaith Argoed Llwyfain* 8; 6<sup>th</sup> century)

- (34) stafell Gynddylan **ys** tywyll heno  
 hall Cynddylan **be-3SG.PRES** dark tonight  
 ‘Cynddylan’s hall is dark tonight’  
 (Anonymous, *Stafell Gynddylan* 1; 9<sup>th</sup> century)

- (35) addwyn gaer y **sydd** ar lydan lyn  
 fine fortress PT **be-3SG.PRES** on broad sea  
 ‘there is a fine fortress on the broad ocean’  
 (Anonymous, *Moliant Dinbych Penfro* 11; 7<sup>th</sup> century)

- (36) rhag Crist gwyn nid **oes** ynialedd  
 against Christ white not **be-3SG.PRES** escape  
 ‘from blessed Christ there is no escape’  
 (Anonymous, *Tristwch yn y Gwanwyn* 37; 13<sup>th</sup> century ms.)

Because of their syntactic or semantic contexts, most of the examples of the Consuetudinal Present/Future in these poems clearly have reference to future time (37, 38) – notice the contrasting tenses in (38), while one example (39) could refer to a future event (the coming

New Year) or instead refer to an iterative series of identical events (every New Year), and another example could possibly refer to the present (40):

- (37) ny **bydif** yn dirwen  
not **be-1SG.CONSPF** PT happy  
'I will not be happy' (Taliesin, Poem 2 [BT 56], line 35; 6<sup>th</sup> century)
- (38) or a *uu* ac a **uyd** nyth oes kystedlyd  
from PT *be-3SG.PRET* and PT **be-3SG.CONSPF** not.to.you *be-3SG.PRES* equal  
'from among those who were and those who will be, you have no equal'  
(Taliesin, Poem 3 [BT 57], line 22; 6<sup>th</sup> century)
- (39) **bid** lawen yng Nghalan eirian yri  
**be-3SG.CONSPF** happy in New.Year bright headland  
'the bright headland is (always)/will be at New Year'  
(Anonymous, *Moliant Dinbych Penfro* 4; 7<sup>th</sup> century)
- (40) o **bydd** ymgyfarfod am gerennydd  
if **be-3SG.CONSPF** meeting concerning friendship  
'if there is/will be a meeting about a truce'  
(Taliesin, *Gwaith Argoed Llwyfain* 14; 6<sup>th</sup> century)

My hesitation about the time reference in (40) is that, although the meeting will take place in the future, the arrangement for it may already be current in present time. The sense is similar to that of my example (16) above, where an arranged meeting for the future was referred to in the present with the use of the simple Present *mae* '(it/there) is'.

Contrasting with the short poems from Taliesin and five anonymous poems from Parry's (1962) selection, the gnomic and nature poetry in Jacobs's (2012) selection show far more forms of *bot* in the Consuetudinal Present/Future indicative than in the Present indicative at a ratio of 109 to 22 instances respectively within a total of 818 lines. It is in the gnomic poetry that the habitual or consuetudinal sense of the Consuetudinal Present/Future forms really come into play, since that is the very meaning of gnomic poetry as 'sententious verse concerning life and the natural world' (Jacobs 2012: xvii). Even here, however, the Consuetudinal Present/Future forms can take a specific present sense (41), a future sense (42) as well as the gnomic, habitual sense (43).

- (41) nid **vid** iscolheic; nid **vid** eleic, unben  
not **be-2SG.CONSPF** cleric not **be-2SG.CONSPF** grey-haired chieftain  
'you are not a cleric; you are not grey-haired, chieftain'  
(*Llym awel* 19a (Jacobs 2012: 1-4))



- (42) mor vychod **vydd** in oes, *mors* ry dadlas  
as trifling **be-3SG.CONSPF** in life *mors* PT determine-PRET  
‘as trifling as it will be in life, death has determined it’  
(*Neud Kalan Ionawr* 1h (Jacobs 2012: 25-6))

- (43) **bit** goch crib keilyawc, **bit** annyanawl ei lef  
**be-3SG.CONSPF** red comb cock **be-3SG.CONSPF** lively his call  
‘the cock’s comb is red, its crow is lively’  
(*Bidiau* 1a (Jacobs 2012: 8-11))

Examples (43) and (10) above give only three of the 71 instances of the Consuetudinal Present/Future forms in the quintessentially gnomic poem *Bidiau* (meaning ‘bes’), and this significantly skews the data summarised in Table 3.12 below. If this one poem were excluded, the data would give rough equal numbers of Present and the Consuetudinal Present/Future in the nature and gnomic poetry. The repetition of Consuetudinal Present/Future *byt* (in various spellings) in this poem belongs to a very common pattern in these poems of starting each stanza with a repeated word or phrase.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the poem *Eiry mynyd* starts each of its stanzas with *Eiry mynyd* ‘mountain snow’ in the 36 stanzas given by Jacobs (2012: 4-8). It is important to note that the gnomic sense of gnomic poetry does not need to be conveyed by the Consuetudinal Present/Future of *bot*; the poem *Gnawt gwynt*, for example, contains no instances of the Present indicative or the Consuetudinal Present/Future indicative of *bot*, but the consuetudinal, gnomic sense is conveyed by the adjective *gnawt* ‘usual, natural’ introducing 23 of the 37 lines of the poem, with another five introducing the second clause in the first line of the first five stanzas. Gnomic poetry, therefore, is problematic as primary evidence for the Middle Welsh dual paradigm of *bot*.

		Present sense	Future sense	Past sense	Gnomic sense	Iterative sense	Total
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i>	Present	116					116
	Consuetudinal	1	8	(1?)		(1?)	10
	Present/Future						
<i>Pwyll Pendueic Dyuet</i>	Present	49 (+1?)	(1?)				50
	Consuetudinal	1	16	2			19
	Present/Future						
<i>Armes Prydein</i>	Present	4 (+2?)			1		5 (+2?)
	Consuetudinal	(1?)	13 (+1?)				14
	Present/Future						
Early verse (Taliesin + Parry’s)	Present	46 (+1?)	(1?)		1		48
	Consuetudinal	(1?)	10 (+2?)			(1?)	12
	Present/Future						
Gnomic and nature poems	Present	32					22
	Consuetudinal	3	9		90		102
	Present/Future						

<sup>14</sup> For examples of poems repeating a form of *bot* in other tenses, see *Gereint filius Erbin* with the Imperfect indicative *oet* ‘it was’ and *Mi a wum* with the Preterite indicative *mi awum* ‘I was’ repeated at the start of many of their stanzas (Coe & Young 1995: 116-25).

Table 3.12: The use of the Present Indicative and the Consuetudinal Present/Future Indicative in a selection of Middle Welsh passages

Note: Where I am unsure of the temporal sense of the verb, as at example (40), I have given it in both places in brackets with a question mark. Where I am uncertain whether a verb is a form of *bot* ‘be’, as at example (32), I give it, too, in brackets with a question mark.

From my analysis the selection of passages, it is clear that the Middle Welsh simple Present indicative is predominantly used to express events and states in present time and occasionally gnomic or general truths; the Consuetudinal Present/Future is frequently used to express future time, with some rarer uses to express present time, and clearly it also expresses the gnomic, habitual sense. My findings, therefore, confirm Strachan’s (1909: §156) statement that the Consuetudinal Present/Future most often expresses the future, but it can also be used in the present to express a historic present, as well as iterative or habitual events in the present and timeless senses. Likewise, Lewis and Pedersen (1937: §485) provide examples that show that the future meaning of the Consuetudinal Present/Future occurs in archaic Middle Welsh, with habitual meanings also possible in the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular.

Another thing my analysis shows is that the simple Present is used many times more frequently in these texts than the Consuetudinal Present/Future, both in literary prose narrative and in early poetry, if the gnomic poetry is excluded. Taking the twelve poems of Taliesin alone, of the 69 examples of *bot* in them, 36 are in the simple Present and eleven are in the Consuetudinal Present/Future. On the basis of these figures, this means that just over half (52.17%, rounded to 2 decimal points) of the examples of *bot* in Taliesin’s poems are in the simple Present, while only about a sixth of them (17.39%) are in the Consuetudinal Present/Future. It may be relevant to consider the fact that seven of the twelve poems by Taliesin have a refrain that has a Consuetudinal Present/Future form (*bydif*) and this means that seven of the eleven examples of the Consuetudinal Present/Future are identical forms in identical contexts. If the refrains are counted as only one example, this leaves five examples (the four examples not in the refrain and one to represent the examples in the refrain), which is a seventh of the number of examples of the simple Present. From a theoretical position, however, I do not think it is appropriate to discount the repetitions, since they are an integral part of early Welsh literary style. Some of the anonymous poems, too, have repetitions, such as *Moliant Dinbych Penfro* with its repetition of *y sydd* ‘there is’ in lines 3, 11, 19, 27, 33, 41 and 48. Even literary prose texts can contain repetitions. For instance, in a lengthy passage in *Culhwch ac Olwen* (lines 576-758), a passage I decided not to analyse because of its repetition, the phrase *hawd yw genhyf gaffal hyny, kyd tybyckych na bo hawd* ‘it is easy for me to get this, even if you think it is not easy’ answered by *kyt keffych hynny, yssit ny cheffych* ‘even if you get that, there is something you will not get’, or variants of these, occur 39 times in the space of 183 lines. Elsewhere, *Culhwch ac Olwen* has substantial passages with very few verbs, which skews the data in the other direction. For instance, between lines 175-373 Culhwch lists Arthur’s warriors in whose names he invokes his claim for Arthur’s assistance; any of the few verbs in this passage occur within short accounts of exploits or descriptions associated with the warriors as they are named. Furthermore, the copula may be omitted in Middle Welsh texts when a temporal reference is not required (D. S. Evans 1964: 140 n. 4), giving a ‘pure nominal sentence’ (Jacobs 2012: xxxvi). This is a typical feature of

descriptive passages in *Culhwuch ac Olwen*, for instance at lines 60-77, as it is in descriptive poetry, for instance in the first four lines of *Tristwch yn y Gwanwyn*, and in many lines of gnomic poetry.

Despite the variety in the patterns of use of two paradigms, let alone particular forms of the verbs, it does appear that the simple Present Indicative of *bot* ‘be’, in other words the forms on the PIE *\*es-* root, usually occurs more frequently than the Consuetudinal Present/Future *b-* form. This difference in frequency casts into doubt how, or even whether, the Celtic *b-* form could make much impression on speakers of Germanic languages on the Continent or in Britain. It is quite likely, however, that the relative frequencies of the two non-past forms were different in the spoken language, since there are stylistic elements in these written texts that are unlikely to be representative of contemporary speech. How far the forms, their semantic distinctions and the contexts in which the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* paradigms occurring in the Middle Welsh written texts reflects the spoken language cannot be determined. What can be determined from the passages I analysed is that form and function of the Middle Welsh dual paradigm appears to differ slightly from the one in Old English. There are, however, other points to consider.

## Section 5: The linguistic dilemma

It is not in dispute that Old English and Middle Welsh both had a dual paradigm, with one paradigm formed from the *\*es-* root and the other from the *\*bheu-* root, and that there was a semantic distinction between the two roots. However, it is not yet clear whether the Celtic Hypothesis is plausible in the light of the evidence and how this evidence can be interpreted from a theoretical point of view.

I said earlier that there is a strong version of the Celtic Hypothesis that says that influence from Brythonic led to the Old English dual paradigm’s origin. The weak version is that Brythonic influence encouraged the retention of the dual paradigm that was already present in Old English. These need to be approached from different angles. The strong, ‘origin’ version has to address the question of whether this influence primarily arose where there was sudden and large-scale second-language learning by adults with little access to native or target-language speakers, with resulting imposition of source-language features. In Chapter 2, I discussed the theories of van Coetsem (1988, 1995, 2000) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988), who demonstrated that greater imposition or interference in the target language was more likely to occur where an individual learner or a community of language learners only learn the target language imperfectly, and this tends to occur in language contact situations that are both sudden and large-scale. The better the strong, ‘origin’ version of the hypothesis meets this sort of scenario, the more plausible it becomes. The weaker version, that of ‘retention’, exists in a vacuum, because there is no evidence that the dual paradigm existed in Old English before contact with Brythonic – this is because of the lack of early evidence, not because of evidence of the absence of the dual paradigm. This is problematic and leaves the weaker version of the Celtic Hypothesis at a disadvantage. On the other hand, this weaker,

‘retention’ version of the hypothesis is not required to address the issue of sudden and large-scale second-language learning to the same extent that the stronger version does. It is less a case of the imposition of features from the learner’s language as it is of the regularization and (over)generalisation of the target language by the learners.

### *Forms and morphology*

The parallel between the Old English and Middle Welsh dual paradigms in their forms and functions is indeed striking, and it serves as a central feature of arguments put forward in support of the Celtic Hypothesis. I suggest, however, that the parallel is not so close that causes other than Brythonic influence can be ruled out as being less likely.

The fact that Old English has forms from both the *\*es-* root and the *\*bheu-* root in the Present is not something that needs explaining here, because the arguments and evidence I discussed in Section 2 above indicate that this was also true of other West Germanic languages immediately before the first large-scale migrations to Britain. Since the roots in question date from Proto-Indo-European, there is no significance in the generally close parallel between their forms in Old English and Middle Welsh. This parallel in form was partly instrumental in getting the Celtic Hypothesis underway, but the parallel is to be expected, given that they are derived from the same Proto-Indo-European roots and differ mainly because of the different sound changes undergone by Germanic, on the one hand, and Celtic, on the other. Therefore, the most obvious parallel between them, the close parallel in their roots, particularly the *b-* form which has created the most excitement, I rule out as being a non-starter. There may, however, be some advantage to considering the specific forms of the *b-* paradigm to see why I rule this out.

	Old High German <i>wesan</i>	Old Saxon <i>wesan</i>	Old English <i>bēon</i>
Singular 1	bim	bium	bēo
2	bist	bist	bist
3	ist	is	biþ
Plural 1	birum	sind	bēoþ
2	birut	sind	bēoþ
3	sint	sind	bēoþ

Table 3.13: Forms of the Present Indicative ‘be’ in several West Germanic languages

On the whole, the parallel between Old English and Old Saxon, both of which are North Sea West Germanic varieties, is not particularly close here, because Old Saxon has followed Old High German in taking the *b-* form for the first and second persons and the *\*es-* root for the third person and in combining them in the one paradigm. In one respect, however, Old English and Old Saxon alone of the early stages of the West Germanic languages share an innovation: they have only one form for the plural, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural form replacing the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> persons in the plural – Ringe (2006: 182) says such syncretism is a Germanic feature. If Brythonic were the main influence for the origin of the Old English *bēon* paradigm, there is no clear answer to why Old English parallels Old Saxon in generalising the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural

across all the plural forms in the *bēon* paradigm as it does in the *wesan* one. Even if plural forms may be more liable to syncretism than singular forms, I would nevertheless suppose that, if there was substantial influence from Brythonic, then the personal endings in the plural would have been more likely to have been kept discrete, as they are in Middle Welsh, Cornish and Breton, as can be seen at Table 3.11 above. On this assumption, it seems in this instance that Brythonic influence, if any, on the forms in the Old English dual paradigm was not substantial enough to override the morphological structure inherited from West Germanic, on the basis of its parallel with Old Saxon. In this respect, the stronger, ‘origin’ version of the Celtic Hypothesis appears less persuasive, while the weaker, ‘retention’ version is unaffected, for the simple reason that it does not claim substantial influence.

I mentioned above that the short vowel *-i-* in Old English 3<sup>rd</sup> singular *bið* and the Northumbrian 3<sup>rd</sup> plural forms *biðon/bioðon* were noted by Tolkien (1963: 30-1), and they are generally accepted as anomalous. Tolkien himself raises the possibility that the short vowel was due to analogy with the short vowel of the *wesan* forms and this is an avenue that has already been explored. According to Made (1910: 37), for instance, the short vowel in *bið* arose due to influence from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular in the other part of the dual paradigm, namely, *is* from the *\*es-* root, which had an inherited short *-i-*. The short *-i-* in the Northumbrian and Mercian 3<sup>rd</sup> plural forms *biðon/bioðon* is attributed by Made (1910: 41-2) to its modification – he says, *[d]as kurze i wurde ... umgelaute* – by the following *-u-* in the form *biðun*, which he says must have preceded the form *biðon*. Tolkien, however, points out that the oddity of the endings of the Northumbrian 3<sup>rd</sup> plural forms *biðon/bioðon* cannot be explained in any other way than by attributing it to influence from the Welsh form *byddant* (1963: 30-1). These anomalies in the English *bēon* paradigm have been taken as evidence that supports the Celtic Hypothesis not only by Tolkien, but by several others such as Ahlqvist (2010: 50-8) and the people whose arguments are summarised in Section 3. Given that influence from Brythonic solves both these anomalous forms, this version appears to be superior to that of Made’s, which has different explanations for the short vowel in the different forms of the verb and does nothing to explain the ending of the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural. It seems very plausible that Brythonic forms or elements of those forms entered the Northumbrian regional dialect, whether due to imposition from or analogy with the Brythonic forms, in the social context of proportionally large numbers of Britons in comparison with people speaking the northern Anglian dialect. Regardless of whether Tolkien and the others are correct with regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural forms *biðon/bioðon*, this is limited to a regional dialect. If it could be shown that the short vowel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular *bið* present in all the Old English dialects was more likely to be due to Brythonic influence than to analogy with the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular in the *wesan* paradigm, this would offer more substantial support for the Celtic Hypothesis. Even with this, however, the parallel in forms does not by itself provide evidence that Brythonic influence led to the actual division of the Old English verb ‘be’ into two separate paradigms in all regional dialects of English. A comparison of the Old English and Middle Welsh stems and endings of the two forms of the dual paradigm makes poor evidence, because the stems and most of the endings of the *\*es* and *\*bheu* forms in both languages have been directly inherited from the PIE roots.

### *Semantic distinctions*

What is significant in the parallel between Old English and Middle Welsh is that the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* roots in both languages form a dual paradigm with somewhat similar semantic distinctions between the roots. This is where Old English differs from the other West Germanic languages and this is the strong-point of the Celtic Hypothesis: written evidence shows that Old English has a dual paradigm; this occurs after a period of contact with Brythonic and there is no evidence that any of the other West Germanic languages also had a dual paradigm. This is where the crux of the evaluation lies: the evidence shows that Old English has the dual paradigm after a period of contact with Brythonic, but does the evidence suggest Brythonic influenced the semantic function of the dual paradigm in Old English? There are various considerations to be explored, some of which make the Celtic Hypothesis less plausible and others that support it.

While the semantic distinction between the two halves of the dual paradigm in Old English is similar to that in Middle Welsh, it is not exact. There is, for instance, an uneven parallel between the functions of the Middle Welsh and the Old English *b*-forms in their reference to future time. As my research confirms, the Consuetudinal Present/Future can express a habitual sense, but it more frequently expresses future time in prose; in poetry it can express future time and the habitual, but with different relative frequencies in different poems. In her study of the present indicative paradigms of Old English *bēon*, Bolze (2013: 228) provides a parallel in Old English to my findings for Middle Welsh when she says, ‘The *b*-forms in the Old English Gospels [...] are predominantly used to imply futurity. The presumed habitual quality of the Old English *b*-forms thus needs to be further examined.’ She shows that there are region differences in the uses of the *b*-forms by analysing the present indicative paradigms of OE *bēon* in the *West Saxon Gospels* and the *Lindisfarne Gospels* and how they are used to translate Latin future tense forms (2013: 228). Whereas the Northumbrian *Lindisfarne Gospels* use the present indicative *b*-forms freely to translate a Latin future form, she says, the *West Saxon Gospels* often uses other forms: for instance, the present tense of a lexical verb is sometimes used instead, sometimes *weorþan* ‘happen, become’ is used to express the future, particularly to translate the Latin *fieri* ‘become’, and sometimes a present subjunctive *b*-form is used where the *Lindisfarne Gospels* uses a present indicative (2013: 221-3). Despite the West Saxon translation using the *b*-form to translate a Latin future form less consistently than the Northumbrian text, it is clear from Bolze’s study that the *b*-form, the *bēon* half of the paradigm, is associated with future time. This is also the conclusion reached by Wischer (2010), who downplays the supposed distinction between specific and generic reference of the *wesan* and *bēon* forms. Wischer (2010: 220-1) says that Ælfric uses forms of *bēon* to translate the Latin future, imperative and subjunctive or ‘optative/hortative’ (2010: 221), suggesting that Ælfric distinguishes between *wesan* and *bēon* primarily according to tense. It is this future sense, then, that forms a parallel with the Middle Welsh function of the *b*-form, rather than the less frequent habitual aspect.

Perhaps it has been a mistake to think of the Old English and Middle Welsh dual paradigms in terms of a semantic distinction along the lines of aspect. There was originally an aspectual distinction to the two Proto-Indo-European roots, but this gave ground to the distinction of tense in some languages. It is by no means a new idea that aspect was replaced by tense as a primary distinction of verb forms in English, as it was in several other Indo-European languages. It seems, however, to have been sidelined by the definitions and discussions by the scholars of the semantic distinction between *bēon* and *wesan* that I reviewed in Section 1. In the early Indo-European languages, aspect was the primary distinction, for instance in Ancient Greek, where the three stems present, aorist and perfect generally expressed aspectual distinctions despite traditionally being called ‘tenses’, for example, by Goodwin (1879: 4-5). Ringe (2006: 24-9) characterises PIE *\*h<sub>1</sub>és-* ~ *\*h<sub>1</sub>s-* ‘be’ as an athematic root present with an imperfective or ‘present’ stem, although stative in meaning. PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>uh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘become’, on the other hand, he characterises as an athematic aorist with a perfective stem (2006: 24-9), and he calls this a perfective present (Ringe 2006: 141). However, as Ringe explains, this aspectual distinction between imperfective and perfective collapsed in Proto-Germanic, which led to competition between what had been the present (imperfective), aorist (perfective) and perfect (stative) stems (2006: 157-8). Similarly, in Middle Welsh the distinction seems not so much along the earlier lines of aspect, but rather seems to be moving towards the tense distinction between Present and Future of Colloquial Modern Welsh. While the PIE *\*es-* root was originally imperfective and *\*bheu-* perfective, when the distinction became one of tense in Middle Welsh, then the *bydaf* paradigm became the future marker. This, then, means that both Middle Welsh and the Germanic languages were travelling in the same direction in privileging tense over aspect in verbal semantics. This does not, however, help the Celtic Hypothesis, since this was a development within the Germanic languages before the Anglo-Saxons encountered the British. Like the parallel in form, this semantic parallel of future meaning is irrelevant to the evaluation of the Celtic Hypothesis.

### *Regional variation*

There may, however, be something of value in Bolze’s (2013) contrast between the West Saxon and the Northumbrian usage of the dual paradigm. For instance, she shows that the grammatical range of the *b*-forms is different in the Northumbrian dialect from that in West Saxon: in Northumbrian the *b*-form is used only in the present indicative, while West Saxon has it in the present indicative, subjunctive, imperative and infinitive (2013: 219). Looking at the present indicative, she finds more non-*b*- than *b*-forms in both texts (2013: 220). In terms of relative frequency, she finds more indicative *b*-forms in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* than in the *West Saxon Gospels* (2013: 220). Bolze gives two reasons for this, the first of which I mentioned above: the *West Saxon Gospels* often uses other forms to express the future, where the *Lindisfarne Gospels* uses indicative *b*-forms. Secondly, the *Lindisfarne Gospels* often gives alternative translations of sentences in the present, and this increases the number of *b*-forms, particularly if the alternatives contain two or more *b*-forms (2013: 221). I repeat Hock’s (1986: 2) example from above showing the otiose use of the *b*-form:

- (7) Fader urer ðu **arð** [oððe] ðu **bist** in heofnum [oððe]  
 father our you **wesan-2SG.PRES** or you **bēon-2SG.PRES** in heaven or  
 in heofnas  
 in heaven  
 ‘Our Father who art (or) who beest in heaven (or) in heaven’  
 (*Gloss on the Lindisfarne Gospels*, Matthew 6:9; mid-10<sup>th</sup> century)

Although Bolze finds more individual examples of the *b*-form glosses in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* than in the *West Saxon Gospels*, their grammatical range is restricted in comparison with West Saxon examples. Both Wischer (2010) and Lutz (2009) have findings similar to Bolze’s and conclude that the semantic distinction between the forms of the dual paradigm are found in the South of England. Hickey (2012: 500-1), too, states that the dual paradigm of *be* is particularly found in West Saxon.

Since it appears that a semantic distinction between the two paradigms in the Northumbrian dialect does not exist in some contexts and the range of moods is restricted, it raises the question of whether there was a true dual paradigm in the Northumbrian dialect, rather than being variation between two independent verbs, as they became in Modern English *be* and *become*. Even if it does function as a dual paradigm in Northumbrian, it does not appear as systematic or as grammaticalised as in the West Saxon dialect. Perhaps the regional variation in the North provides another clue to the origin of the early English dual paradigm. There are two points to consider: first, if the dual paradigm arose out of grammatical tendencies inherited from West Germanic, the different English varieties may reflect different varieties on the Continent; second, if it arose due to Brythonic influence, regional varieties of English may indicate different language contact situations. The possibility that it arose as an internal development within English is a further consideration to take into account.

Firstly, if the English dual paradigm arose out of West Germanic grammatical developments or tendencies, the different English dialects may reflect different varieties on the Continent. Although there is no evidence of a dual paradigm in the continental West Germanic languages, forms of both the *\*es-* root and the *\*bheu-* root existed in the West Germanic languages. Indeed, Schumacher (2007: 194) says the two verbs must have existed in separate paradigms at some stage in West Germanic for the verbs to have shown the pattern they did in Old English. The two verbs did not, however, have a uniform spread in the West Germanic languages, and it may be that the *b*-form patterns of use in the English regional dialects is a reflection of the earlier situation on the Continent. As I described in Section 2 above, Schwarz (1951) discusses the movement northwards of the Old High German innovations, which include the verb forms based on the PIE *\*bheu-* root. On the whole, Schwarz considers the Angles on the Jutland peninsula to have been less influenced by the Old High German innovations on the Continent than the other North Sea Germanic languages, and he draws a parallel with the Anglian dialect in English (1951: 228-9, 32). By contrast, the dialects further south on the continental North Sea coast, the region the Saxons set out to Britain from, were more affected by the Old High German innovations, and languages there such as Old Saxon took on the *b*-forms to a greater extent. The comparatively restricted dual paradigm of the



Anglian Northumbrian dialect may, therefore, be a reflection of the situation on the Continent before the Anglo-Saxon migration. If there is any validity in this suggestion that the linguistic developments within West Germanic played a part in determining the use of the dual paradigm in different Old English dialects, then the Celtic Hypothesis is challenged.

If, however, the dual paradigm arose due to Brythonic influence, the regional varieties of English may indicate different language contact situations between the speakers of the Brythonic languages and the speakers of early English. Bradley (2011), for instance, aims to support the Celtic Hypothesis by looking at the regional differences in the distinction in function between *bēon* and *wesan* (2011: 4-5). Bradley expects the distinction to be maintained more rigidly in the areas in which the proportion of Celts to Anglo-Saxons is higher than in other areas (2011: 4). On the basis of his numbers for forms of *bēon* and *wesan* in different dialects, presented in his Table 2, he argues that Kentish was spoken in an area with the lowest proportion of Celts to Anglo-Saxon (Bradley 2011: 7).<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, his argument has several problems. To begin with, he claims, ‘We know that the formal existence of the double paradigm of “to be” was transferred into OE from early British’ (Bradley 2011: 4), which is clearly contentious. He also states that the equally high frequency of the *wesan* and *b*-forms for the subjunctive in Kentish ‘may suggest a lack of differentiation between the two’ (Bradley 2011: 8), but the statistics alone do not in fact suggest anything of the sort. The reason for the failure of his statistics to suggest anything other than the relative frequency of the forms is that he is using a model and method that is inappropriate. For his purpose of linking the semantic distinction between the forms of the dual paradigm with the proportion of Celts in the population, he cannot simply count the proportions of the forms. Without analysing the semantic function of each example, it is impossible to count it as indicating a differentiation between the two forms. For this reason, his claim that greater influence from the Celtic substrate ‘is found in the North, West and Midlands’ (Bradley 2011: Abstract) is not demonstrated by his paper. Since his database (the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose) has no Northumbrian examples, as he admits (2011: 4-5), he may be unaware of the laxer distinction between the paradigms in the North. Bradley’s assumption that the proportion of Celts to Anglo-Saxons would have been higher in the North is in fact substantiated by archaeology, but this does not by itself constitute evidence of greater Celtic linguistic influence on English.

Furthermore, if we take the South East of England as the place of the earliest, and on the whole perhaps the most sudden, large-scale contact between Britons and Anglo-Saxons, then this is the area in which to look for the greatest influence of Brythonic on early English. This is not to claim that this was *actually* the area of greatest influence, but that it has the profile of the area mostly likely to show influence on the basis of the language contact theories I outlined in Chapter 2. Jackson’s (1953: 220) famous map of river names across England is a good visual depiction of the spread of the language contact from the South-East. Proponents

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<sup>15</sup> It is unclear to what extent Bradley (2011) is influenced by the now mostly discredited opinion that the Celts were slaughtered or exiled from South-East England that I outlined at the start of Chapter 2. The Appendix contains more evidence of the demographic impact after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon.

of the Celtic Hypothesis, for instance Poussa (1990: 407), repeatedly claim or assume that Wessex was the region of greatest linguistic influence from Brythonic, on the grounds that contact between Wessex and the Brythonic-speaking areas was longest there and that there was extensive bilingualism. This is a serious error. It is, instead, the regions in which a large number of people were forced to learn English rapidly as a second language that needs our focus. It is crucial to note that, while Jackson's map shows greater retention of Brythonic river names the further westwards one goes, this does not indicate greater imposition of Brythonic phonological or morpho-syntactic features onto English, but rather increased borrowing of lexical items by English speakers. According to the theories I discussed in Chapter 2, we need to be looking at the predominantly English-speaking areas where a large number of Britons learnt English swiftly and imperfectly, not the successfully bilingual areas: the English heartlands in the South East, not the Marches of the Midlands and the South West. By this criterion, Wessex is still an area of interest; it was settled early and swiftly compared with the Midlands and the North. However, at roughly the same period, or earlier in parts, most of the South-East corner was settled, in other words all along the coast from East Anglia through Essex and Kent to Sussex, inland into Middlesex and by sea to the Isle of Wight. For this reason, the repeated assumption that the dialects of the North, South West and Midlands of England were most influenced by Brythonic would need substantial evidence or a more detailed argument addressing this issue, if it is to be taken as a persuasive hypothesis.

There are two more considerations that are not sufficiently addressed in the Celtic Hypothesis that the English dual paradigm arose due to Celtic influence. One is that the dual paradigm is found in the earliest West Saxon texts and the other is that it disappeared in Middle English. Neither of these considerations would spring to mind as hurdles to be overcome by the Celtic Hypothesis, if it were not for the fact that it is a central tenet of the Celtic Hypothesis that influence from Brythonic should not be expected in the conservative West Saxon dialect but should only become evident in Middle English. The reason given for this, as I discussed in Chapter 2, is that varieties of English that showed Brythonic influence would have been considered too low a register for the high written standard maintained by the educated writers of West Saxon texts. This tenet is generally accepted as valid. Without it, proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis would have great difficulty arguing on behalf of other items on their list of linguistic features claimed to have arisen due to Brythonic influence. Therefore, these two apparently minor considerations are crucial to my evaluation of the Celtic Hypothesis with regard to the dual paradigm.

### *The dual paradigm as a high-register feature of Old English*

The dual paradigm is found in the earliest extant Old English scholarly texts, and these texts are predominantly written in the West Saxon dialect. By the time of these earliest texts, written West Saxon was becoming a standardised variety. As I discuss in Chapter 2, by the end of the Old English period, written West Saxon was conservative to the extent that it was unlikely to have represented the uneducated spoken language closely. Assuming for the moment that Brythonic had the influence on early English that is proposed in the Celtic

Hypothesis, the Celtic communities that had recently (within a few generations) learnt Old English imperfectly as a second language could have imposed the dual paradigm onto their own version of spoken English. Because the greatest imposition would most likely have occurred with large-scale learning without ready access to native speakers, this imperfectly learnt version of English would be learnt as a first language by later generations, carrying the imposed dual paradigm forward into the language. As the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis have explained, this Celticised English language would have had low status. If we accept the high status of the West Saxon written standard and the low status of spoken Celticised Old English, it is highly unlikely that the dual paradigm would have been incorporated into written texts, if it had not already existed in the Old English of the time. Even if we consider Brythonic influence to have occurred within the first century of language contact several centuries before the earliest written evidence of Old English, because there is often a delay between an innovation being taken up in the spoken language and its appearance in formal writing, it is unlikely – not impossible, but unlikely – that the low status spoken innovations would appear in the conservative standardised written form of the language. Although this reasoning relies on probability rather than on direct evidence of the history of early Old English, this position is generally accepted as valid and it is central to the Celtic Hypothesis in general.

For this reason, the dual paradigm must already have existed in Old English as it was spoken and written in Anglo-Saxon communities by the people with a Germanic rather than a Celtic background. It cannot have arisen due solely or primarily to Brythonic influence. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that the dual paradigm was retained in Old English due to support from the dual paradigm in Brythonic. So the weak, ‘retention’ version of the Celtic Hypothesis with regard to this feature is still a possibility, but the strong, ‘origin’ version is not. To state this clearly, the Celtic Hypothesis that the dual paradigm arose as a new development in Old English because of influence of Brythonic is incompatible with a central tenet of the Celtic Hypothesis that there is a significant delay between the occurrence of the proposed influence and evidence of it in the written material. As I explained in Chapter 2, it is because such a delay is generally accepted that proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis are able to argue that several linguistic developments that become evident in Middle English written material could have been established during the Old English period. Arguments for the periphrastic *do*-construction, for instance, rely on this delay for credibility. The scenario runs like this: Brythonic influence spread in the spoken language during the early Old English period, but it is only evident in Middle English texts, on the generally accepted assumption that Middle English writing reflected the contemporary spoken varieties of English, because the Norman invasion broke the West Saxon conservative written standard. According to this scenario, we should expect the dual paradigm to flourish in Middle English written material, on the grounds that it would have been maintained in the spoken language. This is not in fact what we find; instead the dual paradigm dies out early in Middle English, as I indicated in Section 1.

## The loss of the dual paradigm

In reconciling the loss of the dual paradigm in Middle English with the claim that it arose in Old English due to Brythonic influence, there are a couple of possible situations to consider. Perhaps Brythonic influence did create the English dual paradigm, but it was not yet firmly established in the spoken language during the transition from Old English to Middle English, or perhaps it *had* been in the spoken language during the Old English period, but lost ground during the transition period for some independent reason. To clarify the loss of the dual paradigm and the developing mixed Middle English paradigms, I present Burrow and Turville-Petre's (1992: 37) table of 'be' that they derive from two texts, the South-West Midlands *Ancrene Wisse* of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and the North-West Midlands *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

	<i>Ancrene Wisse</i>	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
<i>Infinitive</i>		
	beon	be/bene
<i>Present indicative</i>		
Singular 1	am/beo	am
2	art/bist	art
3	is/bið	is/betz
Plural 1/2/3	beoð	ar(n)/ben
<i>Present subjunctive</i>		
Singular	beo	be
Plural	beon	be(n)

Table 3.14: The loss of the dual paradigm of 'be' in Middle English between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries

Although Burrow and Turville-Petre set out the forms of 'be' in *Ancrene Wisse* as a single paradigm with variant forms, they do state that the *b*-forms could be used with a future sense where they existed as an alternative to the other, \**es* forms (1992: 37). Indeed, D'Ardenne (1961: 250) considers the future sense of the *b*-form variants of the conservative South Midlands AB dialect group, to which *Ancrene Wisse* belongs, to be its primary sense. By contrast, the North Midlands text *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* one and a half century later shows a reduction of the *b*-forms in Burrow and Turville-Petre's (1992: 37) table. Not only had the *b*-forms been lost as a separate paradigm, but *b*-forms in the present indicative were also being lost as variants. Such loss of variant forms would have been associated with the loss of any semantic distinction between them.

There is a possibility that the dual paradigm declined during the Middle English period because of the rise of auxiliaries at that time. Petré (2013: 305, 16-23) argues that the rise of the periphrastic construction with *shall/will*, as part of a general increase in the use of auxiliaries, took over the future semantics that had belonged to the *beon* paradigm and so led to its eventual loss as a separate paradigm. Diwald and Wischer (2013) give a similar explanation. The increasing use of auxiliaries in Middle English can also be seen in the rise of *do*-periphrasis and the progressive construction *be* + *-ing* discussed in the following chapters. With the rise of the constructions specifically geared towards expressing the future,

there was no longer any semantic need for the *b*-form paradigm. This development may contribute to an explanation of why the dual paradigm was lost during the Middle English period, although it does not rule out other possibilities.

Regardless of the mechanism by which the dual paradigm was lost, there is something anomalous with the dual paradigm being lost during Middle English, the period claimed by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis as showing the influence of long-standing Brythonic influence. Clearly, not all periphrastic constructions can be attributed to influence of Brythonic: the modal constructions, for instance, are essentially Germanic. My reasoning is that the loss of the dual paradigm during the period of the supposedly clearest evidence of Brythonic influence is itself a strong indication that the existence of the dual paradigm in early English was not due to Brythonic influence, not at least along principles of the Celtic Hypothesis. Since it is claimed that Brythonic influence was occurring during the Old English period without being evident in writing because of the conservative West Saxon norm, the same reasoning could be applied to this situation: the forms of *bēon* were perhaps being lost in speech during the Old English period due to or despite Brythonic influence, but are found in Old English writings of the time for the very reason that they were conservative.

These considerations challenge the Celtic Hypothesis that Brythonic influence aided the retention of the dual paradigm in early English. I rejected the probability that Brythonic influence could have led directly to the origin of the dual paradigm, on the grounds that it was acceptable in high-register, educated Old English writing. I am now rejecting the plausibility of the hypothesis that Brythonic influence could have contributed to the retention of the dual paradigm in English, in contrast with the other West Germanic languages, on the grounds that the dual paradigm was *not* retained in the written evidence during the very period in which Brythonic influence is supposed to have become evident in writing.

The Old English copulas were clearly in a state of flux. Evidence from the Old English period shows that *weorðan* ‘become’ was being lost altogether, forms of *wesan* on the *\*wes-* root were nearly completely lost in the present, *bēon* was a full paradigm in the present tense and supplied an infinitive, while the *\*es-* forms were retained seemingly untouched, apart from the innovations based the *\*or-/er-* root. Whereas *weorðan* was lost early in English, it was important in West Germanic in developing a periphrastic construction to express the future tense. Like Old English *weorðan*, Old Norse *verða*, Old High German *wertan* and Gothic *wairþan* all mean ‘become’ from the PIE root *\*wert-* ‘turn’ (Hock 1986: 603). It is possible that *bēon* gained ground in Old English because *weorðan* was being lost, because they partially overlapped in meaning or, the other way around, the rise of *bēon* may have led to the loss of *weorðan*; in practice, both processes interact.

The question of the origin of the Old English dual paradigm cannot be taken in isolation from the frequency with which the verb ‘be’ is suppletive in Germanic and in other Indo-European languages. It is only the fact that Old English has the two separate present tense paradigms from the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* roots that appears unusual. However, even having the dual paradigm may not be particularly unusual. It is in essence a form of suppletion, and

suppletion is not an unusual feature of the verb ‘be’. Indeed, the overlapping suppletion in Old English whereby *wesan* provides the past forms for both *\*es-* and *\*bheu* present tenses is paralleled not only in the West Germanic languages, but in the North and East Germanic languages as well. In other words, suppletion is normal in the Germanic languages in their forms of the copula. Furthermore, the verb ‘be’ is typical of the handful of suppletive verbs in the Indo-European languages. Bybee (2007: 53, 171) observes that ‘be’ is one of the most frequently used words that are likely to be suppletive, and this is not a new idea. Nørgård-Sørensen, Heltoft & Schøsler (2017: 9, 36-9, 107-9) discuss the suppletive use of the *\*bheu-* root to express the future, not only in English and Celtic, but also to form the Latin future endings in *-bo* through univerbation. Moreover, it is not only to form the future that ‘be’ in Latin is suppletive. The Latin verb *sum* ‘I am’ and its infinitive *esse* are formed from the *\*es-* root in the imperfective Present, Imperfect and Future Indicative, but from the *\*bheu-* root for the perfective stem *fu-* for the Perfect, Pluperfect and Future Perfect Indicative. These are considered to be forms of the one paradigm. There is another verb, however, that is suppletive semantically, although not considered to be part of the paradigm of *sum*, and it supplies the sense ‘become’: *fio*, an active form, with its infinitive *fieri* having a passive form. In effect, it supplies another paradigm to complement *sum* in the imperfective aspect, and it is particularly useful in providing a quasi-passive sense for the intransitive paradigm of *sum*. *Fio*, which also is derived from the *\*bheu-* root, is considered ‘defective’, since it no longer has the perfective stem *fu-*, which has transferred to the *sum* paradigm. Instead, *fio* takes the perfective passive form based on *factus* ‘having been made; having become’ from *facio* ‘make’. This pattern of suppletion in Latin shows how the aspect of the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* roots has led to complementary distribution within the one paradigm, namely *sum*, *esse*, *fui*, with *fio*, *fieri* flitting between the paradigms of *sum* and *facio*, without belonging to either. The complex relationship between these Latin copula paradigms is an appropriate backdrop to the English situation. Although the Old English dual paradigm seems to show more of a distinction between tenses than aspects, the earlier aspectual characteristics that Ringe (2006: 24-9) demonstrates for the Proto-Indo-European roots may have influenced the existence of the two parts of the dual paradigm, since they were originally differentiated as separate verbs with different aspectual qualities. Although they were independent verbs, because they had complementary aspectual qualities, they could form a suppletive set of paradigms to cover all bases. Like Latin and other Germanic languages, Old English has a three-way division of the verb ‘be’: ‘I am’ contrasts with ‘I was’ and ‘I become’. In Old High German and Old Saxon, this three-way distinction was retained even after the syncretism of the *\*es-* and *\*bheu-* roots into one present paradigm, because the verb *wertan* ‘become’ was retained, with *wesan* supplying the past tense forms. The situation in Old English where there are two paradigms in the present, in this case derived one from the *\*es-* root and the other from the *\*bheu-* root, differs very little from the other West Germanic languages. At the least, I suggest, this West Germanic tendency towards suppletion may have increased the likelihood of the dual paradigm arising in English. Following my reasoning to its end, it is also possible that the Old English dual paradigm was not actually a dual paradigm, but rather separate suppletive paradigms that originally served separate aspectual functions, then moved towards having somewhat separate temporal function, and finally merged into one paradigm as the semantic distinction was no longer maintained.

## Section 6: Conclusion

Since the Old English dual paradigm is not as anomalous among the other West Germanic language as it is often presented, an external influence for it is not essential. The Celtic Hypothesis is not well supported by the evidence for this linguistic feature. The close parallel in forms of the Old English and Middle Welsh verb ‘be’ is not strong evidence of Brythonic influence on the English dual paradigm, since the roots they are derived from, PIE *\*es-* and *\*bheu-*, are found in various Indo-European languages, including the West Germanic ones. The anomalous short vowel in the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular *bið* and the anomalous ending of the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural *biðon/bioðon* in the Northumbrian dialect are possible evidence of Brythonic evidence, but they are counterbalanced by the parallel pattern in Old English and Old Saxon of the replacement of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> plural by the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural form.

There is some semantic overlap between the parallel Old English and Middle Welsh dual paradigms; however, this is not surprising, given that the roots from which they were derived brought their semantics with them. While the Proto-Indo-European roots were originally distinguished according to aspect, by the period of Old English and Middle Welsh they were predominantly distinguished according to tense, with *\*es-* moving from present imperfective aspect towards present tense and *\*bheu-* moving from present perfective aspect to a future sense. Middle Welsh seems to have moved further towards tense distinctions in the copula than Old English, which still showed some possible aspectual distinction between the roots.

Any influence on West Germanic languages from Continental Celtic is likely to have had outcomes in early English similar to outcomes from the proposed Brythonic Celtic influence. Influence from Continental Celtic would better account for the presence of similar forms in the other West Germanic languages. It would also better account for the existence of the dual paradigm as a standard feature of formal Old English written texts. Influence specifically from Brythonic Celtic runs aground on several issues: the differences between the dual paradigms of Old English and Middle Welsh, the existence of the dual paradigm in Old English formal writing and its loss in Middle English informal writing.

Indeed, a central tenet of the Celtic Hypothesis, namely that the effects of Brythonic influence emerge in Middle English, rules out Brythonic influence on the Old English dual paradigm. Because the dual paradigm was in use in Old English formal writing from the earliest period of evidence, it is unlikely that the dual paradigm arose in English because of Brythonic influence, because such influence would most likely have been considered a low feature unsuitable for formal writing. The dual paradigm continued to occur in Old English writing, which became formalised as a conservative standard, but its use declined when the Old English written style gave way to Middle English, which was linguistically closer to the spoken language. Because the dual paradigm does not appear to have been an integral feature of the spoken language, if there was any Brythonic influence on early English, it seems not to have created, or aided the retention of, the English dual paradigm.

## Chapter 4: Periphrastic *do*

*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May* (Shakespeare, Sonnet 18)

### Introduction

It is argued by the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis that the periphrastic use of the verb *do* as an auxiliary in English arose due to influence from Brythonic. The periphrastic *do*-construction, sometimes called *do*-support, is formed with a semantically empty form of *do* in combination with a lexical verb in the form of an infinitive (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 93). For example, in standard Modern English permutations of the sentence ‘I like coffee’ require *do*-support in negative sentences (N), for inversions such as interrogatives (I), as a pro-verbal code (C)<sup>16</sup> and for emphasis (E), together known as NICE:

- (1) I do not like coffee (N)  
Do you like coffee? (I)  
(I like coffee.) So do I (C)  
I *do* like coffee (E)

In standard present-day English periphrastic *do* occurs exclusively in these four syntactic constructions (Rissanen 1999: 139). The use of *do* as a pro-verb (code) was already present in the earliest surviving English texts as an inherited Germanic construction. Other uses of periphrastic *do* arose at a later date, occurring first in affirmative sentences where no emphasis appears to be intended. Although periphrastic *do* in unemphatic affirmative sentences is no longer used in standard Modern English and would not fit into the NICE contexts, the following example can be imagined as parallel to those in (1):

- (2) \*I do like coffee (no emphasis)

Only in some south-western dialects of Modern English can periphrastic *do* also occur in affirmative sentences without expressing emphasis, as in this example from Stogursey in Somerset collected by Klemola (1994: 33):

- (3) When they do meet they do always fight

The interpretation in Standard English of this sentence would regard the two instances of *do* as expressing emphasis, since *do* does not otherwise occur in affirmative sentences in the

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<sup>16</sup> Code refers to the potentially cryptic use of a pro-verb, e.g. *do*, *have*, *be*, in place of a lexical verb to avoid its repetition (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 93, 100). A pro-verb is not itself a periphrastic structure from a syntactic perspective, but semantically it functions as one (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 99).



standard language. By contrast, from the time of the first extant examples in the thirteenth century until the fifteenth century, the periphrastic construction was most commonly used in affirmative sentences (Nurmi 1999: 23-4, Rissanen 1999: 139). This Middle English example from the west of England given by Ellegård (1953: 56) shows its use in an affirmative sentence:

- (4)      and þar-of      þou **dest**                      preche  
             and of-which you **do-2SG.PRES** preach  
             ‘and what you preach about’

(*South English Legendary* 26.87; 13<sup>th</sup> century)

The English periphrastic construction with *do* in interrogative, negative and emphatic sentences is considered distinctively English in comparison with other modern European languages (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 49). Indeed, McWhorter (2009: 171) deems it cross-linguistically ‘very peculiar’. Although there are traces of a similar periphrastic constructions in some of the other Germanic languages, they have not become grammaticalised or standardised in the same way as in English (Rissanen 1999: 139). Proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis have noted the similarity in English to the periphrastic construction using *gwneuthur* (colloquially, *gwneud*) ‘do’ in certain contexts in Welsh. For instance, in the Middle Welsh prose chronicle *Brut y Tywysogyon* in the entry for AD 1022 (T. Jones 1955: 20-1), *gwneuthur* is used periphrastically in combination with the lexical verb *ymgyuarot* in the form of the verbal noun (VN):

- (5)      ac **ymgyuarot**      a **oruc**                      yn ehofyn a              ’e elynyon  
             and **encounter-VN PT do-3SG.PRET**<sup>17</sup> boldly      against his enemies  
             ‘and he encountered his enemies boldly’

A similar construction also exists in Cornish and Breton. Because of this parallel between English and the Brythonic languages, proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis argue that the periphrastic *do* construction only developed in English alone of all the Germanic language to the extent it did due to influence from the Brythonic languages. This hypothesis is said to be strengthened by the fact that the first examples in English seem to come from the South West of England, where Brythonic influence is assumed to have been strongest. There are, however, some issues with this explanation of the rise of periphrastic *do*: the construction

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<sup>17</sup> In Middle Welsh, *gwneuthur* has two stems for the preterite: *gwn-* (Preterite 1) and *gor-* (Preterite 2) with no obvious semantic distinction between them. Thomas (2003) analyses the patterns of usage of the verb *gwneuthur* in the choice between the Middle Welsh preterite forms on the stems *goruc-* and *gwnaeth-* in different contexts, including analysing them according to person and number of the forms and contrasting speech with narrative. Forms on both stems were used over a transition period of several centuries without any clear difference in meaning (P. W. Thomas 2003: 252). He argues that preference for one form or the other seems to depend on the text itself and he presents evidence that shows that the Middle Welsh prose texts selected by him fall into three patterns of usage (P. W. Thomas 2003: 253). In conclusion, he says it is possible that the *goruc-* forms were preferred in certain regions when certain texts were copied/written/translated, and that these forms may have been deliberately used in literature to create a majestic, archaic style, even if the *gwnaeth-* forms were used in speech (P. W. Thomas 2003: 268-9). The reconstructed form is PIE *\*urag-ami* ‘I do’, from which English *work* is also derived (David Willis, personal communication, 03/02/2015).

does not appear until Middle English; it is found in other West Germanic languages; and its parallel in early Brythonic may not have been as close as is claimed.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first outlines the evidence for this construction in early English. In the second section I summarise the proposals for the origin of *do*-periphrasis that do *not* argue for influence from Brythonic. In the third section I summarise the proposals put forward that Brythonic influenced early English with regard to this construction. In the fourth section, I look at examples from the Brythonic languages and present my findings for the evidence for this construction in Middle Welsh. In the fifth section I evaluate the extent to which the evidence supports the claims made by the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis. The conclusion to this chapter forms the sixth section.

## *Part 1: The hypotheses*

### **Section 1: Evidence for periphrastic *do***

Periphrastic *do* is found in written sources from the Early Middle English period and it was well on its way towards its NICE regularisation by the Early Modern English period. Ellegård (1953) presents a wealth of examples of periphrastic constructions with *do* across several centuries, divided according to the genres of verse and prose and the regions of west, east and north England, from which I have chosen the following representative examples of periphrastic *do* to complement the thirteenth-century example (4) above:

- (6) Marie milde to wyf he ches / & þe ordre **dude** vnderfonge  
 Mary mild to wife he chose / and the order **do-3SG.PAST** take  
 ‘he chose Mary mild as wife and took the order’  
 (*Marina* 21, 14<sup>th</sup>-century western verse (Ellegård 1953: 58))
- (7) but þei þat liztly **do** bacbyten  
 but they that lightly **do-3PL.PRES** backbite  
 ‘but those who backbite lightly’  
 (*Psalms* 363, 14<sup>th</sup>-century eastern verse (Ellegård 1953: 65))
- (8) auntris **did** i here of tell  
 adventures **do-1SG.PAST** I hear of tell  
 ‘I heard tell of adventures’  
 (*Cursor mundi* G 12, 14<sup>th</sup>-century northern verse (Ellegård 1953: 74))
- (9) þey worschipped þe sonne whanne he **dede** arise  
 they worshipped the sun when it **do-3SG.PAST** rise  
 ‘they worshipped the sun when it rose’  
 (*Trevisa* 4.327-8, 14<sup>th</sup>-century western prose (Ellegård 1953: 58))

- (10) þay **dydden** lagh on hom þat slown hem  
 they **do-3PL.PAST** laugh on them that killed him  
 ‘they laughed at those that killed him’  
 (Mirk, *Festial* 29.12, 15<sup>th</sup>-century western prose (Ellegård 1953: 58))

- (11) with handys ... he **dyd** make smale workys  
 with hands he **do-3SG.PAST** make small works  
 ‘with his hands he made small works’  
 (*Bartholomew’s Church* 29.13, 15<sup>th</sup>-century eastern prose (Ellegård 1953: 65))

As can be seen from these examples, the periphrastic *do*-construction occurs first in western verse in the thirteenth century (4), followed shortly after by eastern verse (7), northern verse (8), western prose (9), and eastern prose (11); this time difference is shown in more detail in Ellegård’s Table 1 (1953: 44-5). Although eastern verse was slower than western verse to take up the periphrastic construction, by the fifteenth century it had overtaken western verse in the construction’s frequency of use.

In these representative examples of early periphrastic *do*, the subject of *do* is the same as the subject of the infinitive and this differs from the causative use of *do*, where the subject of *do* makes someone else do the action expressed by the lexical verb. Causative *do*, as in ‘make someone do something’, is not periphrastic; early English causative *do* is a two-clause construction and *do* is semantically significant, while periphrastic *do* is mono-clausal and *do* is considered semantically empty. Constructions with *do* where it is difficult to determine whether the construction is causative or periphrastic, which Ellegård calls ‘equivocal’, are found in eastern prose from the fourteenth century, but constructions that were unequivocally periphrastic *do* had barely registered even by the fifteenth. Northern verse shows both equivocal and periphrastic *do* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but periphrastic in very small numbers. Neither construction is found in northern prose texts from this period. (The northern construction is formed with *ger/gar* ‘cause, make do’ from Scandinavian.) According to Ellegård (1953: 11), there seems to be no semantic significance in the use of periphrastic construction rather than the simple form of the lexical verb. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that there may well be syntactic, metrical or stylistic significance in its use.

Until recently Ellegård’s has been the most influential work on this construction, and much subsequent work on periphrastic *do* has made use of his data even if in new interpretations. However, there are two areas in which Ellegård’s description of the usage of *do* can be challenged. Firstly, the claim that equivocal and periphrastic *do* are first found in western verse a century before it is in western prose or in eastern verse is problematic. The earliest examples Ellegård gives from western verse are all from the one text, the late thirteenth-century *South English Legendary* (1953: 56-7), which leaves open the possibility that it was a feature of one scribe or school of scribes, rather than being more widely used in the West. Similarly, the supposed century-long delay between when equivocal and periphrastic *do*

occur in western verse and when they do in western prose may be unrepresentative of the actual use of the construction in thirteenth-century western prose. The absence of examples of the construction in early western prose may simply be due to the lack of surviving early prose texts, and without the texts it cannot be claimed that the periphrastic construction was not used in early prose. With regard to the claim that the constructions were not found in eastern verse until a century later, one of the examples Denison (1985: 47) gives of early unambiguously periphrastic *do* in verse is line 1057 in the ‘C’ manuscript of *King Horn*, a south-eastern text also dating to the late thirteenth century:

- (12) his sclauyn he **dude**            dun    legge  
       his cloak    he **do-3SG.PAST** down lay  
       ‘he laid his cloak down’

(*King Horn* C 1057, 13<sup>th</sup>-century eastern verse)

Ellegård discounts this example as evidence of periphrastic *do* in thirteenth-century eastern verse, on the basis that there is only this one example within one of the manuscripts of *King Horn* (1953: 75). However, his examples from the *South English Legendary* may be nearly as unrepresentative as the one from *King Horn*, and so they are left on a precarious footing as evidence for relative dating. It would seem, then, that periphrastic *do* can be found in a western and an eastern verse text within a quarter of a century of each other, both being only slightly earlier than the many examples of fourteenth-century eastern verse. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the focus on *do* ignores the other periphrastic constructions that were developing at the same time. This is particularly important when considering *King Horn*, since the manuscripts of it that do not have periphrastic *do*, have periphrastic *gan* instead (Ellegård 1953: 75). Mustanoja (1960: 602), indeed, considers periphrastic *do* to have a similar use to *gin* in the ‘periphrastic preterite’. At this stage, *ginnen* (*gan* in past tense) ‘begin’ is no less important as an auxiliary than periphrastic *do*. The constructions with *ginnen*, *ger/gar* and others may have little relevance to the rise and development of periphrastic *do* itself, but may be relevant to the theory that speakers of Brythonic languages imposed their own periphrastic construction onto the early English language. However, this is not the place to discuss the other auxiliaries in more detail.

The second challenge to Ellegård’s position on periphrastic *do* comes from Nurmi’s (1999) study. Nurmi accepts Ellegård’s view that the construction first arose in the South West (1999: 78), but she challenges his method of dating the spread and regulation of periphrastic *do*, arguing that the question of which material is studied is important, because it can lead to different results (Nurmi 1999: 13). Gathering her own data from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC), the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (HC) and the *Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots* (HCOS), she compares the spread of periphrastic *do* in a single genre, correspondence, so that differences in genre should not affect the results (1999: 47-53). As an example of the effect different materials studied can have, she finds that time is more important than regional dialect, not counting the northern region, for showing a pattern of the increased use of periphrastic *do* and the decline of causative *do*, according to the evidence in

the *CEEC*, on the one hand, but finds that this is not the case in the results from the *HC*, on the other (Nurmi 1999: 88-9).

Ellegård and Nurmi agree that evidence for periphrastic *do* is first found in the western and south-western texts, and this is now accepted by many other scholars as the region where periphrastic *do* first arose. For instance, McWhorter (2009: 178) uses Ellegård's data and accepts the South West as the locus of first attestation. Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 50-1), too, argue that it began in west Wiltshire and east Somerset, in the heart of the South West. Although most writers accept Ellegård's data, his interpretation of it is not always accepted. For instance, Denison argues that, since Ellegård's data shows that the causative construction was stronger in the East, it is more likely that, as the construction spread to the west, the two-clause causative construction developed into the one-clause periphrastic construction (Denison 1985: 57).

A significant portion of Ellegård's (1953) and Nurmi's (1999) works are given to the discussion of the later spread and regulation of periphrastic *do*, and so they engage in topics that go beyond the origin of the periphrastic construction. There may, indeed, have been similarities between the factors that enabled periphrastic *do* to arise in the first place and those factors that enabled the construction to be widely accepted into many dialects and eventually into the modern standard variety of English. However, it is also possible that the spread and regulation, themselves two distinct processes, occur for entirely different reasons and in different contexts from the origin of the construction. This is something that cannot be stressed too much, since an evaluation of the Celtic Hypothesis as it relates to *do*-periphrasis must focus on the evidence for the origin, rather than the later development, of the construction.

## Section 2: Standard theories

The question of how periphrastic *do* first arose has provoked much discussion. Some explanations take *do*-periphrasis as an inherited Germanic feature, whether directly inherited – this would explain certain parallels in other modern Germanic languages — or indirectly through the use of *do* in other constructions in West Germanic languages. Language-internal origins have been sought from a range of constructions, deriving it as an independent innovation from other, non-periphrastic, English constructions, such as the emphatic use of *do* (Kozioł 1936), its causative use (Ellegård 1953), as a pro-verb (Nurmi 1999: 15), as a tense marker (Denison 1985), as an aspect marker (Garrett 1998), or because of the semantics of the verb *do* (Nurmi 1999, Poussa 1990). Language-external arguments have also been put forward suggesting that the periphrastic construction arose because of influence from languages other than Brythonic: Latin (Denison 1985), French (Ellegård 1953: 90-108, Visser 1969: 1496), or Scandinavian (McWhorter 2002). The periphrastic construction has also been explained as a *Sprachbund* phenomenon within England, with English and Brythonic influencing each other (Tristram 1997b). While the cases for Latin, French or Scandinavian

origins have not been widely accepted, arguments for Brythonic influence, by contrast, have been gaining support.

### *Do-periphrasis as an inherited Germanic feature*

The argument that periphrastic *do* was inherited from West Germanic has not been strenuously undertaken. However, it does feature as a minor component within arguments that the favourable conditions in which periphrastic *do* could arise in English were already present in the language before it was brought to Britain. For instance, Nurmi (1999: 16) argues that periphrastic *do* in English may be a structure inherited from West Germanic that was brought into England in the spoken language even if it was not yet in the written language: specifically, from the pro-verbal use of *do* common to West Germanic (1999: 17). A variation on this hypothesis argues that a periphrastic construction existed in West Germanic alone of the Germanic languages as the result of language contact with the neighbouring Continental Celtic language. This possibility was put forward by Preusler (1938) as an alternative to his main argument that it was Brythonic Celtic that influenced early English. Schrijver (1999, 2014) takes this further with a more substantial argument that periphrastic *tun/doen* in southern Germany and some Dutch dialects was influenced by the Celtic substratum on the Continent before the Germanic migration to Britain. Certainly, as I discussed in the previous chapter, a suitable language contact situation for such influence has been established through archaeological and historical evidence. Regardless of whether or not the West Germanic construction was influenced by Continental Celtic, other Germanic languages occasionally use an auxiliary in a way similar to English periphrastic *do* (Hickey 2012: 502-4). For instance, *tun* ‘do’ can be used in standard Modern German to express emphasis (Hammer 1971: 241), as well as its standard function as a pro-verb. Moreover, Nurmi points out that there is a periphrastic construction with a cognate of *do* in some stages or in some dialects of each of the West Germanic languages, excluding Afrikaans, even if not always in the standard languages, for example *tun* in German and *doen* in Dutch (1999: 16). It is possible, then, that periphrastic ‘do’ arose as a feature of West Germanic drift that was only realised in writing in the middle stages of the languages when English was no longer a dialect on the Continent.

Langer (2001: 14-41) surveys the West Germanic languages and shows that ‘do’ arose as a semantically empty auxiliary used with the infinitive at roughly the same period on the continent as it did in England: *doen* in Middle Dutch, *doon* in Middle Low German and *tuon* in Middle High German. At this stage in German and into Early New High German, he explains, the periphrastic construction was found in all regions, although not in all dialects of each region, and there was no linguistic or social stigma associated with its use (2001: 58-70). His argument is that periphrastic *tun* became stigmatised as linguistically illogical, old-fashioned, regionally marked as southern German and associated with the lower classes from the middle of the seventeenth century through the efforts of the prescriptive grammarians intent on purifying and regulating the German language as a worthy successor of Latin as the means of communication (Langer 2001: 106-14, 95-213). Lange (2005), too, argues that the

seventeenth-century grammarians proscribed the periphrastic construction with *tun* and that this has influenced the modern standard variety of German. Hypothetically, if not for the influence of these grammarians, the use of *tun*-periphrasis that still functions in some Modern German dialects might have been grammaticalized as part of the standard variety of Modern German. It is possible that the English *do*-construction might not have seemed anomalous and might not have been considered a viable candidate for the Celtic Hypothesis.

However, the argument that the English periphrastic construction with *do* is an inherited West Germanic feature has been challenged on several fronts. McWhorter (2009: 169-70) characterises English periphrastic *do* as a syntactic place filler in contrast with *tun* ‘do’, which he says is ‘primarily a pragmatic strategy encoding focus’, citing Abraham and Conradie (2001). Indeed, van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 287) reject the argument that the existence of parallel periphrastic ‘do’ constructions in Germanic languages indicates that the construction in English was inherited. They point out that such periphrasis may occur at different stages of a language without that necessarily indicating that the construction has been continuously in use, since, they explain, it may be a strategy of simplification that occurs in specific contexts, for instance in child language acquisition (2002: 287). The idea that child language acquisition may lead to analytic *do*-periphrasis is also raised by Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (1990), but she argues that the existence of the parallel periphrastic ‘do’ constructions in Germanic languages is a facet of their spoken languages and that the construction rarely occurs in Germanic languages due to stigmatisation of it.

Any analysis of the periphrastic *do*-construction in English that shows that independent development of similar periphrasis is possible or that it is not a construction particular to English directly reduces the significance in the similarity between the English and Brythonic ‘do’ constructions, and this in turn reduces the strength of the Celtic Hypothesis. Similarly, other viable explanations for the origin of the English construction impact the Celtic Hypothesis negatively.

### *Internal developments*

Hypotheses that periphrastic *do* developed independently within English, as a structure different from those found in the other West Germanic languages, have been both more frequently proposed and more intensively argued. For a long time the most influential of the language-internal arguments for the origin of periphrastic *do* has been Ellegård’s, who argues that its origin is to be found in causative *do* (1953: 118-48). The following representative examples of causative *do* are taken from Ellegård:

- (13) he **dide**                    himm etenn þær / þat    Godd forrbodenn haffde  
       he **do-3SG.PAST** him    eat    there / that God forbidden had  
       ‘he made him eat there what God had forbidden’

(*Ormulum* 12330, 12<sup>th</sup>-century eastern verse (Ellegård 1953: 66))

- (14) a noble church heo **dude** a-rere  
 a noble church she **do-3SG.PAST** raise  
 ‘she raised a noble church’, i.e. she commissioned others to raise the church.  
 (*Legendary* 10.118, 13<sup>th</sup>-century western verse (Ellegård 1953: 61))
- (15) his knictes **dede** he alle site  
 his knights **do-3SG.PAST** he all sit  
 ‘he made all his knights sit’  
 (*Havelock* 366, 13<sup>th</sup>-century eastern verse (Ellegård 1953: 68))
- (16) Thalestris ... **did** wroot to kyng Alexandre in þis manere  
 Thalestris ... **do-3SG.PAST** write-3SG.PAST to king Alexander in this manner  
 ‘Thalestris wrote to King Alexander in this manner’, i.e. Thalestris got someone else  
 to do the writing.  
 (*Trevisa* 1.155.1, 14<sup>th</sup>-century western prose (Ellegård 1953: 63))  
 (Here the infinitive ‘write’ has been attracted to the form of *do* (Ellegård 1953: 141).)
- (17) he ... **dede** hir sittyn wyth hym at mete  
 he **do-3SG.PAST** her sit with him at food  
 ‘he made her sit with him at dinner’  
 (Margery Kempe 133.4, 15<sup>th</sup>-century eastern prose (Ellegård 1953: 72))

It can be seen from these examples that the causative use of *do* indicates that someone (the subject of *do*) causes another or others to perform the action of the infinitive. Ellegård argues that periphrastic *do* arose from causative *do* via sentences in which it was uncertain whether or not the use of *do* was intended as, or interpreted as, causative (1953: 118-48). He gives the following example of what he calls ‘equivocal’ *do*, where a causative or periphrastic interpretation is possible:

- (18) þat folc he **dude** wel lere  
 the people he **do-3SG.PAST** well teach  
 ‘he taught the people well’  
 (*Legendary* 51.102, 13<sup>th</sup>-century western verse (Ellegård 1953: 38))  
 (Ellegård’s translation)

In this example it is possible to understand the *he*, the subject of *dude*, as being also the subject of *lere*, in other words, that *he* was the one to teach, and this would be the periphrastic use. However, it is also possible to understand that *he* caused others to teach the people. This type of sentence structure is potentially indeterminate, or to use Ellegård’s term, ‘equivocal’. When the subject of *do* is different from the specified subject of the infinitive as in (13, 15, 17) or from an unspecified but obviously different subject of the infinitive as in (14 and 16), then the verb series has two clauses and is unambiguously causative. For instance, in (14) *she* is clearly not the actual builder of the church, and so the implied subject of the infinitive can be assumed as some vague people or builders whose identity is immaterial. When there is no



specified or implied subject of the infinitive, it is context that indicates whether the series is causative, periphrastic, ambiguous or simply vague (Denison 1985: 46, 52, 1993: 260). In such situations, what happened is treated as more important than who did it (Denison 1985: 53).

Ellegård shows that the most common causatives in Middle English were *do* in the East, *make* and *let* in the West, and *ger* in the North (1953: 43). Although causative *do* with an infinitive was rare in Old English, it became very frequent, with or without a subject of the infinitive, in the East and South East in Middle English (Ellegård 1953: 118). Initially causative *do* was also very common in the North, too, but it was then replaced by *gar* (Ellegård 1953: 118). Both causative and periphrastic *do* appeared in south-western manuscripts in the late thirteenth century, but Ellegård argues that *do* came to be reinterpreted there as ‘a pure periphrastic auxiliary’ through a combination of two factors: firstly, *do* was not the most usual causative in the South West and, secondly, when it *was* used as a causative, it rarely expressed the ‘logical subject’ of the infinitive (1953: 118). (If the subject of the infinitive had been expressed, it would have marked the construction as causative, but without it the construction was ‘equivocal’ and so was able to be reinterpreted as periphrastic.) Ellegård argues that, once periphrastic *do* was established in south-west verse texts, it then spread east, pushing out causative *do*, which was eventually replaced by *make* (1953: 118).

On the whole, Denison (1985) finds Ellegård’s argument unconvincing: Ellegård’s argument rests on there being a sufficiently frequent use of equivocal causative *do* to provide the opportunity for *do* to be reanalysed as semantically empty, in other words not having so many clearly causative instances of *do* that it would inhibit the development of equivocal to periphrastic *do* (Denison 1985: 47). But, as Denison points out, determining whether or not the construction is causative is difficult (1985: 47, 1993: 278). Since examples of the constructions cannot be objectively quantified without their first being subjectively and categorically identified, the difficulty in distinguishing between them throws into question Ellegård’s (1953: 45-6) statistical ratios between equivocal *do* and causative *do*. Garrett (1998) raises a further problem with Ellegård’s statistical analysis of his data: Ellegård counts all non-causative examples of *do* as one group because of his assumption that periphrastic *do* developed from the causative use, and this will have obscured other functions that should be separated out before the data can be analysed statistically (Garrett 1998: 289).

Nurmi, too, disputes Ellegård’s argument that periphrastic *do* arose out of causative *do*, and views them rather as separate constructions, periphrastic in the West and in London, and causative in the East except in London (1999: 81-2). She explains that the two constructions gradually became harder to distinguish in the fifteenth century as they spread into each other’s territory: ‘Out of this confusion periphrastic DO came out as the winner, while causative DO was replaced with other verbs’ (1999: 81-2). Her own argument is that periphrastic *do*, as well as other constructions involving *do*, developed out of the West Germanic use of *do* as a pro-verb (Nurmi 1999: 15-30).

Rather than emphasizing the differences between causative, periphrastic and ambiguous constructions with *do*, Denison (1985: 52) suggests that ‘we reclassify the material [...] and simply say that a new construction, DO + infinitive, arose during the thirteenth century’. Following Visser (1963-1973), Denison suggests that this new construction had factitive<sup>18</sup> meaning, and that it had probably entered Old English as a causative, initially with a ‘perfective or completive’ meaning from where, he says, it would be an easy transition to the factitive aspect (1985: 52-3). Denison traces the complex development of the construction into a perfective marker as part of the shake-up of the aspectual system with the decline of the Old English ‘prefixal system’ (Denison 1985: 53). This semantic stage of the construction, he says, is supported by the evidence of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (1985: 54). As *gar*, *make* and *cause* join the causative construction, *do* joins the auxiliary system in a one-clause periphrastic structure (Denison 1985: 54-5). At this point, he argues, *do* would probably have lost its function as a perfective marker (Denison 1985: 57). He suggests that the early two-clause construction began in the East on the basis of Ellegård’s showing that the causative construction was stronger there (Denison 1985: 57). It was probably as the construction spread to the West, he suggests, that it developed into the one-clause periphrastic construction, perhaps being reanalysed by analogy with modal verbs (Denison 1985: 57). While he does not offer a clear explanation for why the reanalysis might have occurred during the westward spread, it seems to be because causative *do* was uncommon in the West.

However, Garrett (1998: 290) claims that Denison’s theory does not explain why periphrastic *do* appears first in the West, nor the process by which the causative construction was reanalysed as periphrastic as it spread westwards. Instead, Garrett attributes the origin of periphrastic *do* to its function as a habitual aspect marker (1998: 291). He presents evidence for *do* as a habitual marker in English dialects in the nineteenth century and continuing in a few dialects, for instance in Somerset, into the twentieth century (1998: 292). This, he claims, supports his theory that periphrastic *do* began as a habitual marker and that this is its function in ‘its earliest attestation’ (1998: 283-5). Denison’s and Garrett’s arguments that *do*-periphrasis arose as aspect markers fit well with more general accounts of the use of *do* in language contact situations. However, neither of the explanations is completely satisfactory as they stand: Denison attributes the origin of the construction to the transition from the loss of aspectual markers, through the rise of *do* as a perfective marker, to its use as a semantically empty auxiliary, a process that McWhorter (2009: 176) calls ‘theoretically questionable’. Even less satisfactorily, Garrett’s explanation is based on late dialectal evidence that does not necessarily reflect the earliest attestations of the periphrastic construction with *do*. Furthermore, Klemola (1996: 75-8, 87, 91-100, 21) finds no evidence of periphrastic *do* being used to mark habitual aspect. One important outcome of their works is that they demonstrate the limitations of Ellegård’s explanation for the origin of periphrastic *do*.

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<sup>18</sup> Factitive aspect indicates the bringing about of a state of affairs (Meier-Brügger, Fritz & Mayrhofer 2003: 253).

(19) Seint Beneit to is soster seide : þat he ne **mizte** no leng **bi-leue**. 20  
 Seinte scholace sori was. : ‘broþur,’ heo seide, ‘þin ore,  
 þis holie wordus so murie beoth : 3eot we **moten telle** more;  
 3wane we In godes seruise beoth : we ne **doz** nou3t ore ordre **breke**.  
 Ich am so feble þat ich ne **wene** : neuer-eft more with þe **speke**; 24  
 bi-leue we þis one Nizt to-gadere : for his loue þat deore us bou3te,  
 Ich wot þat he it **wole** us **for-3iue** : 3wane we it **doth** in guode þou3te.’  
 ‘beo stille,’ seide seint beneit : ‘loke 3wat þou **dest telle**,  
 Wel þov wost þat ine mai beo : bi nizte fram mine celle.’ 28

(*Legendary* 34 (St Scholace), 20-28)

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infinitive *bi-leue* ‘stay’ to fall at the end of the line and *wene* in line 24 allows *speke*. Allowing the infinitive to fall in rhyming position is not the only function of the auxiliaries, since there are examples here of infinitives not at line-end: *telle* in line 22 and *for-ziue* in line 26. Nonetheless, it is clear that the use of *do*-periphrasis in early English verse was one of several auxiliary constructions that allowed end rhyme of infinitives. Whether or not this poetic convenience is related to the origin of the periphrastic use, or to a subsequent development, is not clear.

Rissanen’s reason for rejecting Ellegård’s claim that *do*-periphrasis first arose due to its convenience in verse is that it is unlikely ‘that the periphrasis found its way from this highly marked poetic use into prose writing and to ordinary spoken expression’ (1991: 334), and this must be correct. Instead, he says, the periphrastic construction must already have existed in the spoken language in all dialects and that it could then have been used in writing ‘only when it served a useful purpose’ (1991: 334). Citing Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1988), he explains that *do*-periphrasis is likely to arise in situations such as child language acquisition and adult second-language learning, when an analytic structure, rather than a synthetic one, would be favoured (1991: 335). Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1990) argues that *do*-periphrasis would have been stigmatised and so would have occurred only in the spoken language until it was later destigmatised. An advantage of choosing this particular passage from *South English Legendary* as an example is that it contains both narrative and direct speech. It might be entirely fortuitous that the two examples here of *do*-periphrasis occur in direct speech, but it is, nonetheless, worth considering in the light of hypotheses that claim that *do*-periphrasis occurred in speech before it occurred in writing, not only expounded by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, such as Poussa (1990: 407), Tristram (2004: 105) and McWhorter (2009: 180), but also by others, such as Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1990), Rissanen (1991) and Nurmi (1999: 18). Klemola (1996: 126, 41), too, shows that clustering of *do*-periphrasis in non-emphatic affirmative sentences is likely to be a feature of spoken English rather than written and he cites Rissanen (1985, 1991). Klemola (1996: 141-5) attributes this to syntactic priming, where a periphrastic construction in an earlier sentence encourages the use of a periphrastic construction in a later sentence, rather than to emphasize the importance of what is said or to confer emotional colouring as Rissanen has it. Whatever the reason for the clustering, he says, periphrastic *do* appears to be more common in speech than in writing (1996: 151-2). Klemola’s data, collected by himself and by others, is of the spoken dialects of the South West, and it is possible that it reflects the usage pattern of the construction in Middle English. Such a view differs from Ellegård’s (1953: 146), who says, ‘Periphrastic *do* did not exist or was very uncommon in 14<sup>th</sup> century prose and colloquial speech.’ [My emphasis.] As there is no direct evidence of colloquial speech in Middle English, Ellegård’s statement is too strong. However, it is an important tenet of the Celtic Hypothesis that the influence from Brythonic would primarily have been felt in the spoken, informal language until the Middle English period. It may be, then, that *do*-periphrasis was still perceived as characteristic of the spoken language even while it was beginning to surface in Middle English texts. If this is so – and this is not something that can be established – it may favour the Celtic Hypothesis over theories that adduce influence from prestigious languages such as Latin and Norman French.

### *Influence from other languages*

As well as the various language-internal hypotheses that attempt to explain how the periphrastic construction with *do* first arose in early English, several language-external hypotheses have been put forward to argue that *do*-periphrastic arose because of influence from other languages, primarily Latin, French, Scandinavian or Continental Celtic, in addition to Brythonic Celtic.

Ellegård (1953: 54), for instance, claims that his evidence supports Callaway's (1913) suggestion that causative *do* with an accusative and an infinitive arose from Latin. Denison (1985: 52), too, argues that the construction had probably entered Old English under the influence of Latin (1985: 52-3). However, according to Timofeeva (2010: 150, cf. 79), the accusative and infinitive construction after a verb of 'manipulation', e.g. *cause, prevent, tell, forbid*, 'is a native OE construction'. Timofeeva demonstrates that there is some syntactic influence from written Latin on the Old English glosses and translations of Latin texts and on a few original, but derivative Old English texts. However, she argues that the influence from Latin is too restricted to have made its way into the early English language of any speakers other than the few people biliterate in Latin and Old English, explaining that the contact with Latin was literary, rather than being with the spoken language, and that it was primarily among the clergy, who would have been about 1% of the population at the time of the Domesday Book (in 1086 CE) (2010: 9-10). Although the English of this biliterate group may have been affected by their contact with Latin, and even though this group was socially and culturally dominant (2010: 17), she argues, they were too small a group to have had an impact on English as a whole (2010: 10-1). As for influence from spoken Latin, Schrijver (2002) argues that British Latin would have been spoken in the South East at the time of the Anglo-Saxon arrival in England with the possibility of some morpho-syntactic influence on Old English from spoken British Latin, as opposed to written British Latin or other varieties of Medieval Latin. Vennemann (2002b: 303), too, suggests that the shift of linguistic features from Celtic to English may have been buffered by the British Latin speakers, particularly in the lowlands in the South of England. Filppula (2010), however, states that there is no evidence of morpho-syntactic influence on early English either from British Latin (2010: 435), nor from the later introduction of Latin during the Christianisation of the Anglo-Saxons (2010: 438). Timofeeva and Filppula's arguments that there was no significant influence on early English from Latin are more persuasive than those arguing the opposite.

In addition to alluding to the possibility of influence from Latin, Ellegård (1953: 118-9) also suggests that the spread of causative *do* was probably increased through contact with French, arguing that its appearance in rhymed verse in the second half of the thirteenth century was also probably due to French. There was, indeed, a literary circle of influence in western Europe, and common themes can be found in French, English and Welsh poems of the period (Breeze 1997: 36-9). However, according to Nurmi, the French construction with *faire* 'do, make' inherited only the causative sense of Latin *facere* 'do, make', not the periphrastic (1999: 21-2), and this is confirmed by van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 291). Nurmi dismisses examples of Norman French periphrasis with *faire* as counter-evidence and says it

must instead have been influenced by the English periphrastic construction (1999: 21-2). The case for influence from the Romance languages being instrumental in the origin of English *do*-periphrasis is, therefore, not persuasive.

As for Scandinavian, McWhorter initially argues, in his (2002) article, for its influence on various linguistic features resulting from the Scandinavian settlements of the late ninth and early tenth centuries on the east coast, and he claims that this timing is right for the influence to appear first in Middle English (2002: 253-4). He mentions *do*-support in this context as one of the constructions that has developed in English but not in the other Germanic languages (2002: 250). He has, however, now revised his opinion and I discuss it in the next section. Moreover, Klemola (1996: 197-8, 209-14) rules out influence from Scandinavian for this particular structure for syntactic reasons.

The arguments that the origin of early English periphrastic *do* is due to Latin, French or Scandinavian influence have been shown to be unsubstantiated. The hypothesis that it was the Brythonic Celtic languages that influenced early English now needs to be addressed properly.

### **Section 3: The Celtic Hypothesis**

Theories that the origin of the periphrastic *do*-construction is due to its contact with Brythonic Celtic generally take one or other of two main paths: the first of these sees *do*-periphrasis as a simplification of the verbal system occasioned by informal language acquisition similar to simplifications that can be attested in other languages, particularly among creoles; and the second that it arose from the imposition of a specific periphrastic construction present in all of the surviving Brythonic languages.

#### *Do-periphrasis as a common feature of language contact*

Poussa (1990) presents the argument that English *do*-periphrasis arose due to language contact between English and Brythonic in south-west England, specifically in Wessex (1990: 407). She regards the language contact situation itself as liable to encourage *do*-periphrasis regardless of the grammatical structure of the languages in question and suggests that periphrastic *do* arose from a ‘creolization-decreolization’ process, saying that such a construction may occur in any language contact situation (1990: 407), particularly in child language acquisition, second-language learning and bilingual code-switching (1990: 410). Although periphrastic verbal constructions can be evidenced in studies of typical language change in the development of pidgins and creoles (Trudgill 2010: 8), there is no evidence that English went through a period of actual creolization (Garrett 1998: 286, McWhorter 2018: 132-3), and Poussa’s concept is vitiated in this regard. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that the English *do*-construction arose due, on the one hand, to a similar process of language simplification regardless of the languages involved, or due, on the other, to the imposition of a periphrastic construction based specifically on the Brythonic construction

with ‘do’, as Poussa also suggests (1990: 407, 17-21). The two hypotheses, of language contact *tout court* and of Brythonic imposition, work on the same principle of finding a way of coping with the grammar of the target language, in this particular case, as a strategy to avoid some of the complexities of the early English verbal system. In one crucial respect, however, Poussa goes beyond the standard form of the Celtic Hypothesis by suggesting that English *do*-periphrasis arose from a Celtic ‘do be’ construction (1990: 421-5). It is a weakness in her argument that she does not explain why she views ‘do be’ to be superior to the ‘do’-constructions. In their evaluation of Poussa’s argument, van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 295-8), too, conclude that this aspect of it is inadequate. It should be noted, however, that they misrepresent Poussa as saying that *do*-periphrasis is a good way of incorporating foreign *nominals* (Van der Auwera & Genée 2002: 296-7), where she is talking about the convenience of incorporating foreign *verbs* by using *do*-periphrasis with a nominalized form of the foreign verb (Poussa 1990: 411-2).

By contrast, Tristram (1997b) takes the view that periphrastic *do* arose in English due to contact specifically with Brythonic Celtic, rather than simply because of being in a contact situation. She differs, however, from most proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis in arguing that the construction was not due solely to one-directional influence from Brythonic Celtic to early English (1997b: 415). Instead, she argues that the contemporaneous rise of *do*-periphrasis in English and the parallel constructions in the Brythonic languages was due to a *Sprachbund* during a period of high mobility of several languages in Britain in the three centuries of Norman rule (1997b: 415). Like several others, she looks to the modern Celtic Englishes for evidence of the early Celtic languages. It is in this context that she discusses *do*-periphrasis in affirmative statements in some modern varieties of English spoken in the United Kingdom, which she confusingly also calls ‘European English’ (1997b: 401), to determine how they relate to various Celtic Englishes and the Celtic languages spoken in other regions of the country. Her interpretation of the evidence is that the use of periphrastic *do* in non-emphatic affirmative statements in the modern Celtic Englishes is ‘largely indebted to regional English DO/DID pattern and indigenous English tensing, aspect and emphasis marking’, rather than from the Celtic languages themselves (1997b: 412). Consequently, the modern Celtic Englishes may provide little evidence for earlier influence from Brythonic on the origin of the English periphrastic *do*-construction.

Turning to the Celtic evidence, as opposed to the Celtic Englishes, Tristram notes that the construction was more common in Middle Welsh prose narrative than in Middle English narrative or even in Middle Breton texts, and she gives two possible reasons for this. Firstly, for the Middle Breton texts, which were mainly verse, she suggests that the metre may have constrained its use (1997b: 413). Secondly, she suggests that Welsh and Breton may have taken up the periphrastic construction more than English did because of their more complicated verb inflections, at a time when English lost most of its verb inflections (1997b: 413). While it is arguable that the Insular Celtic languages and English form a linguistic area with some structural similarities (Hickey 2017: 270-303), these features are not restricted to them. English lies in what Campbell (2017: 28) calls a ‘trait-sprawl area’ (TSA), since it shares linguistic features with other surrounding languages including periphrastic ‘do’-

constructions. Furthermore, Tristram's suggestions do not account for the existence of the periphrastic construction in Middle Breton and Middle Irish, which were not subject to the influence from English that she claims for Middle Welsh. Tristram points out that there is no evidence of the systematic use of the periphrastic construction in Old Welsh, Old Cornish or Old Breton (1997b: 412-3), which is correct, but only because there is little evidence of *any* syntax at this stage of the Brythonic languages. While Tristram's theory that the periphrastic constructions arose in a reciprocal *Sprachbund* relationship is valid from a theoretical perspective, it has been challenged by other proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis. For instance, Van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 288-9, 98) cite Preusler's (1938: 181-3) argument that periphrastic 'do' is found earlier in Welsh than in English, and they point out that the construction is found in Irish from the eighth century, centuries before the Middle English period. McWhorter (2009: 167-9), too, dismisses the idea that the influence was from English to Brythonic. After giving examples of the periphrastic 'do' constructions in Middle and Modern Cornish (2009: 164-6), Middle and Modern Welsh (2009: 166-7), and Middle and Modern Breton (2009: 167-8), McWhorter concludes that logically, since Breton and Cornish share this construction and they separated in the 400s as the Anglo-Saxons advanced, the construction must have been common to the Brythonic Celtic languages of the South before the advent of the Anglo-Saxons (2009: 167-8). (Even if the 400s saw the beginning of the split rather than the final division into separate languages, McWhorter's general point is valid.) McWhorter (2009: 169) argues that, since the direction of influence is clearly from Celtic to English, it is not necessary to adduce a reciprocal *Sprachbund* as Tristram (1997b) does.

#### *Do-periphrasis as the result of imposition from Brythonic*

The theory that Brythonic Celtic influence led to the origin of English *do*-periphrasis has been discussed at least since the mid-nineteenth century, when Edwards (1844) noted the parallel between the periphrastic constructions with *do* in English and *ober* in Breton in contrast with the lack of parallel with other European languages. Edwards does not mention periphrastic *do* in relation to Welsh, referring only to Breton in this context (1844: 74), although elsewhere he draws a parallel between another English construction and its Welsh counterpart (1844: 66-7). The theory resurfaced a bare twenty years later. Barnes (1863: 26, 1886: 23), as cited in Ihalainen (1990: 189-90), describes the periphrastic *do* construction as typical of the south-west English dialect in the mid to late-nineteenth century, and, according to Garrett, Barnes suggests Celtic influence to explain the use of the construction in the South West (Garrett 1998: 295).

Nearly a hundred years after the idea was first proposed, Preusler (1938) puts forward the suggestion that several linguistic developments in English that are not typical of the other Germanic languages arose due to influence from Brythonic Celtic, including *do*-periphrasis (1938: 178-91). He gives examples of the periphrastic construction from Modern Welsh, including the following (20), in which the first sentence contains *wnêst*, a form of *gwneuthur*



‘do’ as a lexical verb, and the second sentence contains an emphatic, affirmative periphrastic construction with *wnês* and the verbal nouns *troi* ‘turn’ and *rhedeg* ‘run’:

- (20) beth a wnêst                      ti wedyn? **troi**            ar fy sawdl a **rhedeg** am  
       what PT do-2SG.PRET you next        **turn-VN** on my heel and **run-VN** about  
       fy einioes **a wnês**                      i wedyn  
       my life        **PT do-1SG.PRET** I next  
       ‘what did you do next? I turned on my heel and ran for my life’

To explain the later NICE regulation in English, Preusler introduces his term ‘d-Element’ as a way of explaining why English periphrastic *do* was later retained in negative and interrogative sentences, on the basis that the similarity between a ‘d-Element’ in Welsh reinforced the English word *do* (1938: 183). Unfortunately, Preusler does not explain what he means by the ‘d-Element’, and Denison (1993: 275-6) calls it ‘bold supposition’. Ellegård (1953: 120 n. 2) rightly objects to Preusler’s suggestion that *do* in negative and interrogative sentences in English was influenced by a Welsh ‘d-Element’ and he is unimpressed, possibly mistakenly, by Preusler’s other arguments. As a result, Ellegård casts doubt on the Celtic Hypothesis as a whole, which is unfortunate, since Preusler’s arguments regarding other English constructions are more plausible and prefigure later arguments put forward to support the Celtic Hypothesis. Indeed, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 227) say that Preusler is ‘often quoted’ in discussions of the linguistic features showing possible influence from Brythonic. However, his specific arguments for *do*-periphrasis are not usually discussed, tacitly avoiding their dubious nature.

Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto’s (2008) book is probably the most comprehensive in recent times to argue for the Celtic Hypothesis, and *do*-periphrasis is one the main linguistic features they discuss. Like most recent proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, they do not dispute Ellegård’s (1953) data for examples of *do*-periphrasis in Middle English. They follow him in saying that periphrastic *do* was first found in the thirteenth century in south-west Middle English texts, first in affirmative sentences, spreading then to negative sentences and questions by the end of the fourteenth century, and finally to emphatic sentences (2008: 50). They explain that, although the use became reduced in affirmative sentences and nearly disappeared in Standard English by 1700, periphrastic *do* has survived in some of the south-west English dialects in non-emphatic affirmative sentences (2008: 50). Because of this, they suggest, there is a strong possibility *do* was introduced into the English of south-west England ‘as an auxiliary and a habitual aspect marker’ during the early medieval period due to substratal Brythonic influence (2008: 189). Tristram (1997b), by contrast, attributes the habitual aspect of *do* in the Celticised English of south-east Wales to recent influence from English. This is, however, only a minor point in Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto’s argument.

In their case for the Celtic Hypothesis, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008) take a two-pronged approach by looking first at the contact situation in the early medieval period, and then at the modern contact situations between the Insular Celtic languages and English. The first part of their book looks at the various arguments put forward on the basis of the

medieval evidence for the written English language. In the second part they analyse the evidence from the modern spoken Celtic Englishes in order to provide indirect support for the Celtic Hypothesis, by seeing if the observable modern contact outcomes of influence in the Celtic Englishes correlate with the medieval linguistic patterns. This comparison of the medieval and modern results of the language contact brings a new direction to the Celtic Hypothesis. Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto state that the two periods of language contact show ‘very similar’ results (2008: 259): the periods both ‘involve prolonged and intense periods of contact between speakers of Celtic and English, leading eventually to language shift on the part of the former’, and, although the two periods do not have the same ‘linguistic systems’, the modern one can be assumed ‘to provide significant indirect evidence of rather similar effects in the medieval period’ (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 220).

Because their explicit aim is to investigate first the medieval evidence and then the modern, one would expect their analysis of periphrastic *do* to be discussed first in the medieval context before being discussed in the modern context of language contact between the Celtic and the English languages. In fact, however, their methodology for finding the origin of periphrastic *do* in the medieval period is to extrapolate backwards from Modern English dialects, rather than looking at the medieval evidence itself (2008: 50-1). They claim that English *do*-periphrasis began specifically in western Wiltshire and eastern Somerset. They aim to show that the patterns of the construction’s use in the South West of England over the last hundred to two hundred years gives us insight into its usage in the South West during the medieval period (2008: 55). To do this, they focus on the non-emphatic, or ‘unstressed’, periphrastic *do* construction in affirmative statements that is found in some modern dialects of English, giving examples from Klemola’s (1994: 33) field studies and referring to data from the Somerset dialect of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries presented in Klemola’s (1996) dissertation (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 50-1). They consider it significant that, despite the non-emphatic use of the periphrastic construction in affirmative sentences largely disappearing from standard English by 1700, it continues to survive in some of the south-west English dialects (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 50). In effect, their discussion of the construction in the first part of the book does no more than reaffirm a widely-held view that periphrastic *do* arose in the South West. What is crucially lacking in their discussion of the medieval period of language contact and influence from Brythonic is a comparison of the parallel periphrastic constructions in Middle English and in any of the Brythonic languages.

In the second part of their book, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto present their research into the Celtic Englishes that have arisen during the last couple of centuries in order to provide indirect support for the Celtic Hypothesis (2008: 220). They date the main language shift in Wales from the Welsh language to English to about a hundred years ago (2008: 212) due, they say, primarily to the industrialisation of south-east Wales and the influx of labourers over a period of around 150 years (2008: 135-9), in addition to the earlier influence on English in the border areas (2008: 138-9). They explain that from the late Middle Ages until the early nineteenth century, there was ‘diglossia without bilingualism’ throughout Wales because of the lack of contact between the English-speaking gentry and urban communities

on the one hand and the Welsh-speaking rural communities on the other (2008: 137, 40). They explain that, with the increasing industrialisation of south-east Wales from the 1770s, this pattern of language use was disrupted and Welsh-speaking rural communities experienced the rapid and informal language shift to English that led to the formation of Welsh English (2008: 135-9), or rather of the regionally distinct Welsh Englishes (2008: 145). There was, however, one context in which the shift to English occurred formally, namely at school, which increased bilingualism (2008: 140-1). This meant that throughout Wales younger people were learning English formally, while in the south-east of Wales working-age people were learning English informally and rapidly (Paulasto 2006). As a result ‘the most non-standard and Welsh-influenced English of all was spoken in south-east Carmarthenshire, in an area where the cultural and language-historical traits of the rural, Welsh-speaking west and the anglicised, industrialised south-east combined’ (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 146).

The linguistic effect of these more recent historical and social changes described by Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto includes the use of a periphrastic construction with *do* as a habitual marker in the variety of English spoken in the south-east and south of Wales, those areas that were anglicised earlier (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 189-90). This, they say, contrasts with the use in the other regions, which were anglicised later and which do not use periphrastic *do* as a habitual marker, but rather as a perfective marker (2008: 189-90). By contrast, Klemola (1996: 65) says that the progressive with habitual function in west South Wales, as a calque on the Welsh construction, exists where there is ‘more recent bilingualism’. Unfortunately, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto do not give a satisfactory explanation of why Welsh influence in the modern context led to *do* becoming a habitual marker in one region of Wales, but a perfective marker in another. They state – and van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 302) agree with them here – that, while there may not be enough evidence to prove the origin of periphrastic *do*, there is enough evidence to suggest that Brythonic influence must be considered (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 59). It is not clear, however, how Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto visualise the Brythonic languages influencing early English. Since they discuss the medieval Welsh-English contact effects only in terms of the modern ones, it is hard to tell how they see Brythonic influence playing out in the original creation of the English periphrastic *do*-construction. Not only is it a dubious method to equate the outcomes of modern language contact situations with those of over a thousand years earlier, but Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto are not explicit in explaining which modern influence they are extrapolating back from: the south west or the south east of Wales.

McWhorter (2009), in a more coherent argument in support of Brythonic influence on English periphrastic *do*, argues it was triggered by the equivalent periphrastic construction in the Brythonic languages (2009: 163-6), specifically, a parallel construction in Cornish (2009: 167), on the grounds that this was the Celtic language spoken in the region in which the first evidence of the English construction is found (2009: 164), equating the Brythonic language of the English South West specifically with Cornish. He addresses a potential problem that Middle Breton uses the construction only in affirmative sentences (2009: 167-9), by saying

that this does not mean that Old Cornish did not have the construction in other types of sentences, since Breton, he points out, may have subsequently been influenced by French (2009: 168-9). (While the construction is rare in the negative in Middle Breton, Hemon (1975: §158) does find examples of it.) McWhorter reasons that, even if Old Cornish had only had the construction in affirmative sentences, it could still have been the influence on early English, since it is English affirmative sentences that first show examples of the periphrastic construction (2009: 168-9). He gives examples from Jenner's (1904) grammar of Cornish, claiming that they show the closest parallel with English, and stating that Modern and Middle Welsh do not have such a close parallel (2009: 166-7). In fact, McWhorter has misunderstood the tense of the Colloquial Modern Welsh examples he takes from King (2003) and misrepresents the Modern Welsh periphrastic construction with *gwneud* 'do'. (I shall outline the Modern Welsh situation briefly in Section 4 below.) As to how this influence was effected, McWhorter argues that the British Celts in south-west England had several centuries during which to learn English well and to add Celticisms to it and it is for this reason, he claims, that *do*-periphrasis spread through English from south-west England northward (2009: 184-6). While McWhorter's argument is more coherent than Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto's, it does not offer a satisfactory analysis of the linguistic context in which *do*-periphrasis arose in English.

Van der Auwera and Genée (2002) offer the most balanced evaluation of the possibility of Celtic influence on the origin of periphrastic *do*. They discuss the main hypotheses put forward in the late twentieth century to account for the origin of English periphrastic *do* with a focus on the various Celtic Hypotheses, and they offer a sensible analysis both of the theories and of the linguistic evidence available to support these theories. They begin with a section that establishes where the periphrastic *do* construction stands in relation to other functions of English *do* with representative examples (2002: 284-6), and follow this up with the use of 'do' in Germanic (2002: 286-8), Celtic (2002: 288-91) and French (2002: 291-2). They note that constructions with 'do' can be found in modern German and northern Dutch, and that it was also used in older stages of German, Dutch, Frisian and Old Norse (2002: 286-8). However, they argue, it is not necessary to consider the periphrastic construction in various Germanic languages to be directly related to each other (2002: 287). Instead, they suggest that such periphrasis may be a strategy of simplification that can be found in stylistically simple registers 'as a strategy for avoiding inflection on lexical verbs', for instance in child language (2002: 287). Furthermore, their explanation shows that English behaves like the other West Germanic languages, and this counters the claims made by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, for instance by McWhorter (2009: 164), that English is very unusual in having a periphrastic *do*-construction.

When van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 288-9) turn to the Brythonic evidence, they make a distinction between two subtypes of Celtic 'do'-periphrasis. The first has the 'do' auxiliary before the verbal noun, and this order, they say, is 'fairly common' in all stages of Irish at least from the eighth century, but is found infrequently in Middle Welsh and Middle Cornish, while it is very common in Modern Welsh, particularly in North Wales (2002: 288-9). The other subtype has the verbal noun before 'do', with a relative particle between, giving the

non-VSO word order called the ‘abnormal order’,<sup>19</sup> and this second subtype was common in Middle Welsh and Middle Breton, and possibly in Middle Cornish, but was less common in the Goidelic languages (2002: 289-90). They give the following example of the second subtype in Middle Welsh (2002: 289):

- (21) **kyuodi a oruc** a dyuot y Lynn Cuch  
**arise PT he.did** and come to Glyn Cuch  
 ‘he arose and went to Glyn Cuch’

(*Pwyll Pendewic Dyuet* 8–9; 11<sup>th</sup> century)

(Their gloss and translation)

On the basis of the geographic distribution of the periphrastic, causative and pragmatic constructions with ‘do’ in the Germanic and Celtic languages, which they present in their Map 1, van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 292-3) point out that English and Brythonic Celtic are closer to each other than either is to its cousins. Although warning against mono-causalism, they conclude that the hypothesis that the Brythonic periphrastic ‘do’ construction influenced the English *do*-periphrasis is plausible, and that there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to say that such influence is likely, even if there is not sufficient direct evidence to prove or disprove the hypothesis (2002: 299, 302). However, they reject the idea that the retention of *do*-periphrasis in non-emphatic positive sentences in the South West is evidence that *do*-periphrasis first arose there, pointing out that this only indicates that the use in the South West is archaic, and not that the construction arose from Celtic influence (Van der Auwera & Genée 2002: 298-9).

One of the many strengths of van der Auwera and Genée’s analysis is that they provide and discuss relevant examples. In my next section I provide further evidence for constructions in the Brythonic languages that parallel early English *do*-periphrasis.

## *Part 2: The evaluation*

### **Section 4: Brythonic evidence**

The main focus of this section is on Middle Welsh examples of the use of *gwneuthur* ‘do’ as an auxiliary in a periphrastic construction. To counteract any suggestion that the construction in Welsh was influenced by English and to show that it is instead a feature of Brythonic, I also outline the parallel constructions in Cornish and Breton. Welsh *gwneuthur*, Cornish *gruthyl* and Breton *ober*, all meaning ‘do, make’ as lexical verbs, also function as auxiliaries in conjunction with a verbal noun. *Gwneuthur*, *gruthyl* and the inflected forms of *ober* are cognate, and have the root *gr-* or *gn-*, while the form *ober* itself, as a verbal noun, is suppletive from Latin *opera* ‘work’ (Elmar Ternes, personal communication 6/2/2015).

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<sup>19</sup> The word order is considered ‘abnormal’ from the point of view of Modern Welsh (D. S. Evans 1964: 179-81).

Although the use of the periphrastic construction with auxiliary ‘do’ can be assumed to have changed in some ways during the period from early Brythonic Celtic to the modern forms of the languages, it is similar in structure in all the Brythonic languages for which we have evidence, and it can be regarded as one and the same periphrastic construction continuing from the Common Brythonic period. However, the middle periods of these three languages is the earliest for which we can find suitable evidence of periphrasis, since the oldest surviving examples of these three languages are too short for syntactic analysis. Since some proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, for instance Preusler (1938), McWhorter (2009) and Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 49-59), use examples from modern languages to support their arguments, I begin my discussion with the modern Brythonic languages, Welsh and Breton. Cornish, of course, died out and so ‘modern times’ for Cornish ends for practical purposes in the seventeenth century, although it held on longer in isolated pockets. Although Cornish is being revived, it is not an appropriate stage of the language for my purposes.

### *Modern Welsh*

One reason for giving examples from Modern Welsh is that, as a spoken language, it might be considered to shed light on an earlier spoken form of the Brythonic language that is claimed to have influenced early English. However, not only would the intervening millennium and a half have distorted this light immeasurably, but the use of Modern Welsh examples sometimes obscures the differences from the periphrastic construction in Middle Welsh. For instance, periphrasis with *gwneud* (the informal form of *gwneuthur*) in conjunction with a verbal noun is common in only some registers of Modern Welsh. It is used freely in colloquial, spoken Welsh; where it is found in writing it is marked as being a representation of the informal or spoken language. However, such periphrasis is not usually found in formal or written forms of contemporary Welsh. Proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis who use examples from Modern Welsh to illustrate the Brythonic periphrastic construction need to be aware of the differences in its use in Modern Welsh from that of the Middle Welsh construction with *gwneuthur*. Nonetheless, providing Modern Welsh examples can be advantageous, considering the fact that some linguists may be more familiar with Modern Welsh than they are with Middle Welsh.

Looking at some of the modern grammars for language learners shows that periphrasis with *gwneud* is a complex topic. For instance, King (1993), writing for language learners, says that there are three ways of expressing ‘he bought/he did buy’ in Modern Welsh: *brynodd e*, *naeth e brynu* and *ddaru o brynu* (1993: 136-7), which I gloss here:

(22) **brynodd**            **e**  
       **buy-3SG.PRET** he

(23) **naeth**            **e** **brynu**  
       **do-3SG.PRET** he **buy-VN**

- (24) **ddaru**                      **o brynu**  
**happen-3SG.PRET he buy-VN**

King explains that his list of translations is simplified (1993: 137), as is to be expected in a grammar book aimed at learners of spoken Welsh. While it might seem strange to begin my discussion with a simplified grammar for beginners, many other grammars ignore periphrastic *gwneud* altogether. Awbery (1976: 13-9, 96-9), for instance, whose focus is on the periphrastic use of *cael* ‘get’ to convey the passive in Modern Welsh, also discusses periphrastic constructions with *bod* ‘be’ and a few other verbs, but not those with *gwneud*. Stephen Williams (1980: 72-6, 94-5, 117-20), too, discusses periphrasis with *bod*, but not with *gwneud*. The reason for the absence of reference to the periphrastic construction with *gwneud* in these two discussions of Modern Welsh is that they describe the grammar of standard literary Welsh (Awbery 1976: 2, S. J. Williams 1980: v), which takes the Welsh translation of the Bible of 1588 as its standard (S. J. Williams 1980: 85). Although examples of the periphrastic construction with *gwneud* are common in spoken Modern Welsh and can be found in informal forms of the contemporary written language, they are usually avoided in formal, literary Welsh. Periphrasis with *gwneud* can, however, also be used in formal Welsh if the lexical verb is emphasized (Elwyn Hughes, personal communication, 20/1/2015), a point that both Awbery and Williams omit to mention. Since fronting can be used in Welsh to emphasize most sentence constituents, but the unmarked position for verbs is clause-initial, to be able to emphasize the verb the verbal noun takes the clause-initial position of the inflected verb, leaving the inflected auxiliary *gwneud* to follow later in the clause (Borsley, Tallerman & Willis 2007: 126-8). This emphatic use of *gwneud* is paralleled in English by the use of *do*-periphrasis for emphasis, although the word order is naturally reversed. Like English *do*, *gwneud* can also be used as a pro-verb, as the ‘code’ in ellipsis (Rouveret 2012). Unlike *do*-periphrasis in English, therefore, periphrasis with *gwneud* in formal Welsh occurs in restricted contexts.

It is, therefore, important to clarify that some forms of periphrasis are not available in all language registers of Modern Welsh and that there may also be regional variations in which particular verbs are used as auxiliaries in such periphrasis. ‘Do’-periphrasis in Modern Welsh is, therefore, not only a common construction, but it is also a complicated one in terms of when it is used and how it is realised. Proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis that rely on examples from Modern Welsh to draw a parallel with the construction in English would do well to acknowledge this, since they tend to give a ‘normalised’ version of the Welsh language.

#### *Periphrasis with ober in Modern Breton*

Press (1986: 128) gives three ‘conjugations’ in Modern Breton, one of which is periphrastic using *ober* ‘do’, for which he gives the following example with the Imperfect of *ober* to express the habitual in the past:

- (25) **dont a raent** do Lannuon  
**come-VN PT do-3PL.IMPF** to Lannion  
 ‘They used to come to Lannion’

(My gloss based on his; his translation)

Borsley, Rivero and Stephens (1996: 54, 66) discuss periphrasis in Modern Breton in more depth and they gloss the following example of an inflected form of *ober* used as an auxiliary with a verbal noun:

- (26) **Lenn a ra** Anna al levr  
**read PT do.3SG.PRES** Anna the book  
 ‘Anna reads the book.’

It is clear that ‘do’-periphrasis is an established syntactic feature in the modern Brythonic languages. However, it has to be established what form the periphrasis in Brythonic took at the time its speakers were first learning to speak English and whether this form bore any resemblance to the early English *do*-periphrasis. If it did not, the case for Brythonic influence may be weakened. The fact that Modern English *do*-periphrasis has a similar structure to periphrasis with *gwneud* in informal Modern Welsh and *ober* in Modern Breton is indeed suggestive, but not sufficient to rest a hypothesis on without a demonstration that the modern languages are representative of the Brythonic language(s) spoken during the fifth and sixth centuries. After a brief outline of the construction in Middle Breton and Middle Cornish, I discuss the situation in Middle Welsh at more length.

#### *Periphrasis with ober in Middle Breton*

The Middle Breton periphrastic construction with *ober* is similar to the constructions in Modern Breton, Middle Cornish and Middle and Modern Welsh. As Willis (2007: 287-96) explains, the middle stages of these Brythonic languages are verb-second showing the abnormal word order, unlike Modern Welsh. This means that the periphrastic construction in Middle Breton has the word order verbal noun + particle + ‘do’ + rest of sentence. Although Willis does not specifically address the periphrastic construction with *ober*, he gives an example of it from Middle Breton:

- (27) **fezaff agra** en holl tut sauant  
**beat-VN PT+do.3SG** the all people wise  
 ‘she beats all the wise people’

(My gloss based on his; his translation)

The construction is used frequently according to Hemon (1975: §158), who gives the following example:



- (28) **mont** de Velem      **a rezant-y**  
**go-VN** to Bethlehem **PT do.3PL-they**  
 ‘they went to Bethlehem’

(My gloss; his translation)

*Periphrasis with gruthyl in Middle Cornish*

Periphrasis with *gruthyl* ‘do’ and a verbal noun is also a common syntactic structure in Cornish. In Middle Cornish, *gruthyl* ‘do’ can be used as a lexical verb meaning ‘do, make’ in an inflected form, as a verbal noun or even as a past participle. It can also be used as an auxiliary in conjunction with a lexical verb in the form of a verbal noun (Zimmer’s trans. of H. Lewis 1990: 46-7). Inflected forms of *gruthyl* as a lexical verb (29 and 30) and as an auxiliary (31) can be seen in the following examples from one of the fifteenth-century mystery plays edited and translated by Norris (1859: 6-7, 108-9):

- (29) ny a ’d      **wra**      ty then a bry  
 we PT you.OBJ **do-3SG.PRES** you man of clay  
 ‘we make thee, man, of clay’      (*Ordinale de origine mundi* 69)
- (30) ty ru ’m **gruk**      pur havel thy ’s  
 you PT me **do-3SG.PRET** very like to you  
 ‘thou hast done me, very like to thee’      (*Ordinale de origine mundi* 88)
- (31) guelen a pren a **wraf**      **synsy**  
 rod of wood PT **do-1SG.PRES hold-VN**  
 ‘a rod of wood I do hold’      (*Ordinale de origine mundi* 1444)

(My glosses; Norris’s translations)

A brief glance at *Ordinale de origine mundi* gives the impression that the periphrastic use of *gruthyl* as an auxiliary occurs much less frequently than the use of inflected lexical verbs. On the one hand, this text may well represent the spoken language more accurately than some other writings, since it is written in direct speech as drama. On the other hand, the reduction in the use of periphrasis could be because it, as is usual in drama, is written predominantly in the present tense. So, if the periphrastic use of *gruthyl* is more common in the preterite than in other tenses in Middle Cornish, as is also the case in Middle Welsh, the mystery plays may be unrepresentative of Middle Cornish writing in having a reduced frequency of the preterite tense. However, this text may be unrepresentative as evidence of the use of periphrasis with *gruthyl* for another reason, since, according to Thomas (1992a: 346), the Cornish miracle plays were probably translations from English plays. This opens the possibility that the

syntax of the English originals has influenced that of the Cornish texts. What date these putative English originals may have been and whether they showed evidence of *do*-periphrasis is too hypothetical to contemplate.

Fife contrasts the periphrastic use of *gruthyl* with the periphrastic use of *gwneuthur* in Welsh: ‘The Cornish structure is used to form the regular present tense of the VN, a use not possible with the Welsh DO’ (1990: 216). Although the ‘simple present’ of *gwneuthur* can be used as an auxiliary in Modern Welsh, it conveys the future tense; the present tense in Modern Welsh is conveyed by the present tense of *bod* ‘be’ with a preverbal particle and a verbal noun.

#### *Periphrasis with gwneuthur in Middle Welsh*

The use of periphrasis with *gwneuthur* in Middle Welsh is in some ways similar to that of Modern Welsh. On the one hand, in Middle Welsh and in informal Modern Welsh there are two ways of forming some tenses: an inflected lexical verb (the ‘short form’) or an inflected form of *gwneuthur* with a verbal noun for the lexical verb, and the choice between them appears to be optional. On the other hand, in Middle Welsh both the short form and the periphrastic construction sometimes occur in the same formal, literary text, something that does not occur in formal Modern Welsh as I explained above. Furthermore, there are some Middle Welsh texts that show no evidence of the periphrastic construction at all. Arguments in support of the Celtic Hypothesis that rely on Modern Welsh evidence alone are, therefore, potentially misleading.

Strachan (1909: 78-9) states that periphrasis with *gwneuthur* and a verbal noun is common in Middle Welsh, and he gives these two examples from *Ystorya Gereint Uab Erbin*, one of the romances associated with the *Mabingion*:

(32) a **cherdet** recdi yr coet a **oruc** y uorwyn  
and **walk-VN** before.her the wood PT **do-3SG.PRET2** the girl  
‘and the girl went to the wood’

(33) **rodi** penn y karw a **waethpwyd** y Enid  
**give-VN** head the stag PT **do-3SG.PRET1.IMPERS** to Enid  
‘the stag’s head was given to Enid’

(My glosses; Strachan’s translations)

Examples (32) and (33) show the basic structure of the periphrastic construction in Middle Welsh of a verbal noun (VN), a verbal particle (PT) and an inflected form of *gwneuthur*. The construction also occurs in variant forms. For instance, it also occurs with more than one verbal noun governed by an inflected form of *gwneuthur*:

- (34) **dynessau** a **oruc** Osla Gyllelluawr [...] a **dygrynnyaw** yndaw  
**approach-VN PT do-3SG.PRET2** Osla Big-knife [...] and **surround-VN** to-him  
 ‘Osla Big-knife approached and surrounded him’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 1180–2)

(My gloss; Strachan’s translation)

Another Middle Welsh sentence structure appears similar, although it is technically not periphrastic: Strachan notes that the verbal noun can be used without an inflected form of *gwneuthur* as ‘an historical infinitive’ (1909: 79), as at (35). This omission of the auxiliary is not simply scribal error. Fowkes (1991: 21–4) gives 28 examples from the *Mabinogi* of the verbal noun as the only verb in a clause and I have found additional examples of the verbal noun alone in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, for instance at lines 510–1, 920–1 and 1174, not counting examples where it is uncertain whether the verb form is the verbal noun or the uninflected verb stem for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular.

- (35) **dyuot** y porthawr ac **agori** y porth  
**come-VN** the porter and **open-VN** the gate  
 ‘the porter came and opened the gate’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 786)

(My gloss; Strachan’s translation)

From my own analysis of *Culhwch ac Olwen*, I have found that a common pattern of usage in Middle Welsh prose narrative – and this is unlike the situation in formal Modern Welsh – is for a sentence with periphrasis to occur alongside one using the short form, at the overall rate of about one sentence with periphrasis to three or four sentences using the short form. For instance, example (36) has a sentence without periphrasis that is immediately followed by one with periphrasis (37):

- (36) o hynny allan y **gelwit** Goreu mab Custenhin  
 from that out PT **call-3SG.PRET.IMPERS** Goreu son Custenhin  
 ‘from there on out he was called Goreu son of Custenhin’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 810–1)

- (37) **guascaru** a **orugant** wy y eu llettyeu  
**scatter-VN PT do-3PL.PRET2** they to their beds  
 ‘they scattered to their beds’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 811)

This alternation is particularly striking when a lexical verb is used first as a verbal noun with an inflected form of *gwneuthur* (38) and then as the inflected verb itself in the very next sentence (39):

- (38) **dywedut** a **wnaethant** y Arthur y ual y daruu udunt  
**say-VN PT do-3PL.PRET1** to Arthur PT how PT happen-3SG.PRET to-them  
 ‘they said to Arthur how it had turned out for them’

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 825)

- (39) Arthur **a dywawt**  
Arthur **PT say-3SG.PRET**  
'Arthur said'

(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 826)

These examples show that periphrasis with *gwneuthur* and a verbal noun exists in Middle Welsh. However, there are features of it that may be obscured when proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis rely predominantly on examples from Modern Welsh. Clearly, the context in which the periphrasis can occur differs in an important respect: the construction occurs optionally in formal literary texts in Middle Welsh alongside the short form, but not in Modern Welsh. The word order of the construction in Middle Welsh also differs and I shall have more to say about that in the next section. First, however, I wish to consider how representative the examples above are of the use of the periphrastic construction of *gwneuthur* and verbal noun in Middle Welsh.

Taking *Culhwch ac Olwen* as a test case, my analysis shows that both the simple form and the periphrastic construction occur throughout the four sections I analysed (lines 1–200, 374–600, 751–952 and 1057–1246 of the edition by Bromwich and Evans (1988)), although the relative frequency of the two constructions, short form or periphrastic, is not uniform across the four sections. A comparison of the numbers of periphrastic and non-periphrastic verbs shows this variation in frequency with the non-periphrastic form being favoured throughout. In the first section, there are 28 instances of the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* to 215 non-periphrastic. In the second section, there are 28 instances of periphrasis to 337 non-periphrastic. In the third, there are 35 periphrastic to 294 non-periphrastic. In the fourth section of this text, the ratio is 32 periphrastic to 211 non-periphrastic verb forms. In the 819 lines of *Culhwch ac Olwen* I analyse, the periphrastic construction occurs at about the rate of 15 examples to every 100 lines, while the non-periphrastic construction occurs at about the rate of 129 to every 100 lines. Table 4.1 below summarises these figures and those for the other texts I have analysed.

Text	Number of lines	Number of periphrastic <i>gwneuthur</i> constructions	Number of non-periphrastic verbs
Taliesin's poems	455	0	Not counted
Anonymous poems	131	0	Not counted
<i>Brut y Tywysogyon</i> before 1000	268	0	Not counted
<i>Brut y Tywysogyon</i> 1000-1103	499	32	Not counted
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 1	200	28	215
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 2	227	28	337
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 3	202	35	294
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 4	190	32	211
<i>Pwyll Penddeic Dyuet</i>	654	64	Not counted
Totals	Total: 2826	Total: 219	Total (of counted): 1057

Table 4.1: The number of periphrastic and non-periphrastic verbs in a selection of Middle Welsh texts  
Notes:

1. In counting the number of non-periphrastic verbs, I have not included verbal nouns except where they take the place of a finite verb.
2. In counting the number of periphrastic constructions, I have not distinguished between the 'abnormal' and 'mixed' word orders.

As can be seen from the table, the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* occurs in *Pwyll Penddeic Dyuet*, the first of the *Mabinogion* tales, slightly less frequently than it does in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. However, how the periphrasis is used in both texts is very similar, and its average frequency per hundred lines in *Culhwch ac Olwen* would be reduced if I included passages such as lines 201-373, which contains few verbs and possibly no periphrasis.

The periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* also occurs in the prose chronicle *Brut y Tywysogion*. In the following two examples taken from the Red Book of Hergest edition of Thomas Jones (1955), the use of *gwneuthur* as a lexical verb in the entry for the year 814 can be contrasted with the periphrastic use of *gwneuthur* with the verbal noun *anuon* 'send' in the entry for the year 1100–1102<sup>20</sup>. (The construction in (40) is not affected by the variant reading *y gwnaeth*.)

- (40) Ac yna y bu daran vawr ac a wnaeth [y gwnaeth RT] llawer o loscuae  
and then PT was thunder great and PT do-3SG.PRET1 lots of fires  
'And then there was great thunder and it caused many fires'  
(*Brut y Tywysogyon*, 814 CE)

<sup>20</sup> Entries in the chronicle are often given two dates: the first is the date given in the text and the second is the date determined from external sources. In this instance, the text gives the year for the entry as 1100, but the actual year was 1102.

- (41) Ac **anuon a wnaeth** kennadeu hyt yn Iwerdon  
 and **send-VN PT do-3SG.PRET1** messengers until in Ireland  
 ‘And he sent messengers to Ireland’ (*Brut y Tywysogyon*, 1100–1102 CE)

The periphrastic use of *gwneuthur* with the verbal noun in (41) can also be contrasted with numerous examples of the non-periphrastic use of the preterite, for instance:

- (42) Ac yna y **crynowd** y daer yn Llydaw  
 And then **PT shake-3SG.PRET** the earth in Brittany  
 ‘And then the earth quaked in Brittany’ (T. Jones 1955: 2-3)  
 (*Brut y Tywysogyon*, 685 CE)

Surprisingly, in my analysis of roughly the first sixth of *Brut y Tywysogyon*, encompassing the entries for the years 680–682 to 1100–1102, I found that there were fewer examples of the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* than I was expecting. The thirty or so periphrastic uses of *gwneuthur* that I found in the entries between 680–682 and 1100–1102 show a structure and function similar to what I found in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and to Strachan’s (1909) examples from *Gereint Uab Erbin* at (32) and (33). However, the earliest example of periphrasis with *gwneuthur* is probably in the entry for the year 1014, although it is unclear whether the object of *gwneuthur*, namely *ymaruoll*, is a verbal noun or simply a noun – Jones (1955: 331) considers it to be the verbal noun, which would make it periphrastic. In practical terms, the distinction is semantically irrelevant for the reader of the text, and the syntax is simply ambiguous. Regardless of the status of the entry for 1014, in the entry for 1022 there are three unambiguous examples of the periphrastic construction and the construction is used frequently from then onwards. Stylistically this entry at 1022 stands out as being slightly longer than the entries before and after it. It also stands out as being slightly more discursive, including a report of someone’s later renown, a proverb and, unexpectedly, a simile. Apart from this, the point of transition between the usually brief and rather formulaic earlier entries and the discursive later entries appears to be shortly after the Norman Conquest. By the entry for 1100–1102, the style becomes very discursive, leading to much longer entries, and so more examples of periphrasis are to be expected per entry. In fact, half of the 32 examples of periphrastic *gwneuthur* I found date to the one entry for 1100–1102. As is to be expected, the entries between 680–682 and 1100–1102 contain many more verbs in the simple form than there are in the periphrastic construction.

Despite the uneven distribution of the Middle Welsh evidence for periphrasis, the evidence discussed earlier in this section shows that periphrasis with ‘do’ as an auxiliary verb is an integral feature in the Brythonic languages, as well as in Irish. It is likely to have been inherited as a feature common to Insular Celtic. ‘Do’-periphrasis with *gruthyl* in Middle Cornish and with *ober* in Middle Breton indicate that periphrasis with *gwneuthur* cannot have been an independent innovation in Middle Welsh, nor, indeed, could it have arisen due to influence from English. It must have existed in the Brythonic language from the beginning,

and its continuation into informal Modern Welsh and Modern Breton would indicate that it was present in the spoken language throughout its history.

## Section 5: Middle Welsh evidence and the Celtic Hypothesis

There is evidently a problem with the Middle Welsh examples of periphrasis with *gwneuthur* presented by some proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, since the examples are presented as though they were representative of the written evidence as a whole. Instead, Table 4.1. shows that the periphrastic construction occurs only in certain texts and, even then, it occurs far less often than the non-periphrastic form. Although it can be accepted that the construction with *gwneuthur* must have been present in the spoken language, we have no way of knowing whether it was more or less frequently used than the written evidence suggests. In addition to the problems with the evidence, the Celtic Hypothesis shows other weaknesses in arguing for Brythonic influence on early English. While the basic hypothesis that Brythonic may have played a part in the origin of the English periphrastic *do*-construction appears to be in accord with some of the evidence, some of the specific claims made by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis do not. One major area of weakness lies in its repeated assertion that the influence occurred due to bilingualism in the English South West, which is a misapplication of recent theories of language change in contact situations. Another matter for concern is that the word order of the periphrastic construction in the evidence does not parallel that of the English construction, not to mention the lateness of the evidence.

### *Periphrasis with gwneuthur in Middle Welsh: date, region, genre*

It is problematic for the Celtic Hypothesis that examples of periphrasis with *gwneuthur* in *Brut y Tywysogyon* occur in no entry dated earlier than 1014 CE. At the period when Brythonic is supposed to have influenced early English soon after the Germanic immigrations to Britain, I have not found sure evidence of such periphrasis in early Middle Welsh, only from towards the end of the Middle Welsh period. *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the earliest of the stories associated with the *Mabinogion*, may date from the second half of the tenth century on the basis of orthography, glosses, vocabulary and syntax, while the story itself would have been much older in oral form (G. Jones & Jones 2000: xvii). However, the oral survival of traditional stories does not ensure the survival of the earlier syntax when they come to be written down, if the stories are in prose. So *Culhwch ac Olwen* provides certain evidence only that periphrasis with *gwneuthur* was in use in writing at the time of the White Book and Red Book manuscripts in the late Middle Ages. (The appendix on Brythonic texts and manuscripts has more information on this topic.) By contrast, poetry may help to retain the original syntax, because the metre, alliteration, assonance and rhyme would resist changes within the poem. It is, therefore, significant that I have not found an example of periphrasis with *gwneuthur* in the early poem *Y Gododdin* by Aneirin, nor in the poems of Taliesin in Ifor Williams' edition (1968), since these poems may originally have been composed as early as the sixth century. Although the poems' manuscripts date from the thirteenth century, the

older syntax is more likely to have been retained, which seems to indicate that early Middle Welsh and, perhaps, even Old Welsh did not use the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur*, at least in so far as writing is concerned.

The contrast between the lack of periphrasis with *gwneuthur* in the earlier texts and its occurrence in the later ones is clear from Table 4.1. What is not indicated on the table is that the division between the frequent use of the periphrastic construction and its absence runs along three lines: date, region and genre. The early poetry of Taliesin and Aneirin belong to the North from Edinburgh and Strathclyde, through Cumbria and other regions west of the Pennines down to North Wales (Jackson 1969: 64-6, cf. Jarman 1988: lxx-lxxv). On the basis of the places referred to in the texts, the *Mabinogion* stories are likely to be from the South West of Britain, including Wales and the Cornish peninsula, with close connections with south-east Ireland. The Latin chronicle that was translated into several versions as *Brut y Tywysogion* was probably written in Strata Florida in central Wales, although it is not certain that it was also translated there (T. Jones 1955: xi-xii). This gives a clear fault-line between the early, northern verse and the later, western and south-western prose.

This division in the Middle Welsh evidence along the non-periphrastic, early North and the periphrastic, late West and South West might suggest that the construction with *gwneuthur* arose first in the west and south-west of Britain and that it did not arise until the late Middle Welsh period. Tristram (1997b) deserves credit for taking the lateness of the evidence in Welsh into account in arguing that Middle English and Middle Welsh must have influenced each other as a *Sprachbund* phenomenon, on the grounds that the construction appears to have arisen during the same period in both languages. McWhorter (2009), too, distrusts the Middle Welsh evidence, although in his case he is wrong in rejecting the evidence from Welsh, because he misunderstands the syntax. However, it is clear that Tristram, too, is wrong, since the periphrastic construction with ‘do’ is an Insular Celtic feature, with evidence of the construction both in Irish and Breton showing that English influence could not have preceded any possible Celtic influence. Furthermore, there is no getting around the high probability that the periphrastic construction was present in spoken Old and Middle Welsh, and earlier, on the basis of the construction’s presence in the other Insular Celtic languages and its presence in the later spoken Welsh language. For this reason, a division along the dating between early and late texts cannot be valid.

### *Region*

A regional division between North Britain and South-West Britain would better conform to the majority of arguments presented by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, according to which the Brythonic influence that caused *do*-periphrasis to arise in early English occurred



within the western borders of the Kingdom of Wessex in South-West England.<sup>21</sup> As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 50-1) argue that the influence began in west Wiltshire and east Somerset, in the heart of the South West, on the basis of earlier data collected of the region's dialect and their own data collected by extrapolating backwards from Modern English dialects. McWhorter (2009: 178) accepts the South West as the locus of first attestation, as do Poussa (1990: 407-20), Nurmi (1999) and Tristram (2004: 98). This region is generally accepted as reflecting Ellegård's (1953: 47) claim that *do*-periphrasis is found considerably earlier in south-western Middle English texts than in south-eastern texts.

Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 50-1) have a particular investment in the west Wiltshire and east Somerset region, where the non-emphatic use of the periphrastic *do*-construction in affirmative sentences continues to survive as an English dialect. They trace the retention of this use of the construction back several generations, based on published and unpublished *SED* material, where it was found in the west Wiltshire and east Somerset areas and in the western end of Cornwall in the middle of the twentieth century (2008: 51-2). To take this further back they rely on Ellis's (1889) fieldwork, which shows a similar distribution of this linguistic feature during the late nineteenth century and, assuming his informants were 'non-mobile, older, rural males' (NORMs), this may indicate the non-emphatic use of periphrastic *do* in affirmative sentences as far back as the first quarter of the nineteenth century in Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Somerset (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 52-4). This is valuable research into a conservative dialect region, particularly if the data is shown to parallel Ellegård's examples. However, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto make claims that are unwarranted by the evidence. They claim that the modern evidence of the non-standard use of the affirmative *do*-construction in the South West can be used to determine the geographical distribution of the periphrastic construction with *do* during the Middle English period (2008: 55). Specifically, they claim that this conservative dialect supports their argument that the construction 'was originally a feature of the south-western dialects of ME, and only later diffused to other vernacular dialects' (2008: 55). However, the modern evidence they provide only shows that non-emphatic *do*-periphrasis in affirmative sentences has been *retained* in a few of the dialects of the South West, not that it first *arose* there, as van der Auwera and Genée (2002: 298-9) also point out.

The source of this confusion may be a lack of distinction between the origin of the periphrastic *do*-construction, which Ellegård shows began as affirmative sentences where *do* was not emphatic, and the later regulation of the construction to the NICE contexts described at the beginning of the chapter. The construction in non-emphatic affirmative sentences moved from the South – I suggest it was not specifically from the South West – moving northwards. Klemola, in an earlier work, specifically says periphrastic 'began in the southern varieties of the language' and spread to the northern dialects much later as part of the spread

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<sup>21</sup> Note that the south-west of *Britain* extended further south and west than the south-west of *England* did until the English pushed further south to the border of modern Cornwall several centuries after Wessex was first established as a kingdom.

of the London standard variety (1996: 196). Overriding this initial dispersal, the NICE regulation process restricted the use of the periphrastic construction in non-emphatic affirmative sentences. Significantly, Klemola (1996: 54-7) shows that the impetus for the regulation has been moving westwards from an eastern starting point and that that the regulation has not yet reached the conservative dialects of the South West. He demonstrates that there is a distinct transition zone to the north and east of the Wiltshire and Somerset focus (1996: 53-5). The conservatism of this south-west region he explains as resulting from the fact that the region had little contact with other dialects until the Second World War (Klemola 1996: 150). It is clear, then, that the regional dialect in the Wiltshire-Somerset area may show a parallel with the earliest form of *do*-periphrasis that spread throughout England, but that the continued use of the construction there has nothing to do with its place of origin.

It may, therefore, be safer to say that the first English examples of *do*-periphrasis occur more generally in the South, given the close dating of the first south-western and south-eastern examples as I point out in Section 1, and the high probability that it occurred more generally in speech than in writing. Klemola's (1996: 53) Map 3.9a. shows the spread of periphrastic *do* throughout the Saxon and Kentish dialect regions and into the West Midlands and just south of the Humber, while there are virtually no examples of it in the East Anglian and East Midlands regions held by the Angles. The idea that the English periphrastic construction began in the South and only much later spread to the North because of the spread of the prestigious London dialect from the seventeenth century, as Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 55) also claim, is substantiated by Klemola, who shows that an innovation in the deep structure of the dialects of the North resulting from Scandinavian influence would have meant the periphrastic *do*-construction would not have developed in the northern dialects (1996: 197-8, 209-14). Even if Brythonic influence had been active in the North, McWhorter (2009: 185) sensibly points out that it is not to be expected that English would respond to influence in the same way in all regions. According to the linguistic evidence, then, the origin of the English *do*-construction should be sought in the Saxon regions, from Essex in the east to Wessex in the west.

From the point of view of recent contact theories, too, the logic behind the Celtic Hypothesis claim that the influence from Brythonic occurred specifically in the western part of Wessex needs rethinking. Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 259) claim that Brythonic contact with the English in Wessex led to the periphrastic construction due to 'prolonged and intense periods of contact between speakers of Celtic and English, leading eventually to language shift on the part of the former'. More generally, they say 'there was in all likelihood a period of extensive bilingualism for a considerable length of time after the *adventus*' (2008: 131). McWhorter (2009: 184-5), too, claims that contact in the English South West meant the Celts had centuries to learn English and to add Celticisms to it. Specifically, he says we should expect the Celts in the South West to 'have acquired English in relatively full form' (2009: 184). In contrast with the Celts of the South West, those in the South East are acknowledged by various proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis to have learnt English both earlier and more quickly. For instance, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 131-2) state that 'the rate of language shift varied from one area to another: this process was first completed in the east

and south of English'. Tristram (2007: 194), too, describes 'some areas, such as the south-east, shifting much earlier than the north and south-west'. Poussa (1990: 420) agrees that the Celticised eastern dialects of English were older than the Wessex dialect, but it is in Wessex she believes imposition would have occurred on the grounds that the Celts would have become bilingual there (1990: 407). It is clear that many proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis view the South East as the region of the earliest language contact between Celts and Anglo-Saxons, while the South West is viewed as the region of greater imposition from Brythonic on English on the basis that the shift from Brythonic to English was much slower there and involved substantial bilingualism.

This is, however, contrary to the theories of language change in contact situations initially expounded by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and van Coetsem (1988). As I discussed in Chapter 2, some of the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis try to take these contact theories into consideration. Tristram (2004: 102), for instance, says the shift from Late British to Old English is typical of language contact in which the adult learners of the high-status target language transfer 'phonological and L1 features' but not lexical items, using the terminology of Thomason and Kaufman (1988), although not actually citing them. Following them, Tristram says that adult Britons would initially have learnt Old English in an unstructured context, and there would have been few adult bilinguals until later (2007: 201). However, she also says this transfer through shift occurred in the South West, the Midlands and the North (2004: 102), whereas, she claims, the speakers of British Latin in the South East would have been quickly acculturated because of the strong Anglo-Saxon presence (2004: 98). Fast language shift, Tristram claims, typically leads to bilingual child acquisition, rather than the slow and imperfect language acquisition that would tend to favour the transfer of language features (2004: 98). Here Tristram has missed the point that it is fast and imperfect language acquisition that favours the transfer of linguistic features. In a similar fashion, McWhorter (2009: 183) quotes Thomason and Kaufman (1988) on the imposition not of lexis but of syntax by a shifting language community, although he, too, does not seem to have benefitted from their explanation of the contact situation that is most likely to lead to imposition of L1 features onto L2. It is here that proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis err in attributing Brythonic influence to the more fluent bilingual speakers and to slow language acquisition. Influence through imposition is more likely to occur when large numbers of second-language learners learn quickly and imperfectly (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 41-7). It is imperfect second language acquisition that leads to imposition, and once speakers are bilingual, they no longer impose linguistic material (Van Coetsem 1995: 74-5). For this reason, if Brythonic speakers influenced early English phonologically or morpho-syntactically, it would be more likely to have occurred where there was a large number of Britons learning English quickly and where they had little access to people who spoke English well. In the South East, Britons were subdued quickly by relatively small numbers of Anglo-Saxons, whereas the Britons in the South West had more opportunity to learn English gradually and more proficiently. From a theoretical point of view, the language contact situation in the South East appears more likely than that in the South West to have encouraged the imposition of linguistic features such as the periphrastic *do*-construction onto early English. Indeed, as Poussa (1990: 420) points out in the context of Brythonic influence on the English *do*-construction, the 'eastern

dialect continuum is far older'. For this reason, the Celtic Hypothesis would appear more viable if the claim was that periphrastic *do* arose in the South, rather than specifically in the South West.

As I explain earlier in this section, of the Middle Welsh texts I have analysed, it is the *Mabinogion* tales and those associated with them that are closely linked with South Wales and the Cornish peninsula. In this regard, they show a cultural connection between the South Welsh and Cornish regions that mirrors the pre-Saxon linguistic connection. The point that South Welsh was linguistically closer to Cornish than it was to North West is made by Jenner (1904: 14), so this cultural and linguistic connection is not surprising. It is significant, then, that the *Mabinogion* tales provide the evidence for the periphrastic 'do'-construction in the Brythonic languages. Since it is impossible to know what variety of Brythonic was spoken in the eastern half of Wessex and the other Saxon regions to the east, there is a lack of evidence of whether the 'do'-construction occurred there. In the northern Brythonic region, by contrast, there is evidence that suggests the 'do'-construction was not used in early written verse, whatever the situation was in the spoken language. It would seem to be a logical conclusion that periphrastic 'do' was a feature of the variety of Brythonic in the south-west of Britain, but not of the variety from North Wales and up the west coast to Strathclyde and across to Edinburgh. However, there are two considerations that may give pause to this seemingly logical conclusion. Firstly, there is the fact that the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* is well established in modern spoken North Welsh. The second consideration is that the word order of the Middle Welsh periphrastic construction is the reverse of that of English *do*-periphrasis and it has to be questioned whether this reduces the likelihood that English construction arose due influence from the Brythonic one. The first of these considerations is resolved by the assumption that early North Welsh was as close to or closer to early South Welsh than it was to the northern dialect of Edinburgh. This is nonetheless a consideration that should be mentioned by proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis given the significant differences in the dialects of North and South Wales even now and the significant regional differences in the Middle Welsh texts. For the second consideration, van der Auwera and Genée (2002) have drawn attention to the 'abnormal' word order of the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* in the Middle Welsh texts, where the lexical verb comes before the auxiliary. It is a weakness of the Celtic Hypothesis that this difference in word order from the periphrasis in English is not addressed and resolved. I am assuming here that imposition of a verbal construction would be more likely than not to retain the structure – here the order of the constituents within the periphrasis – of L1 unless there was something in L2 that hinders this. Since both English and Welsh were V2 languages at the time according to Willis (Borsley, Tallerman & Willis 2007: 287-96), there does not appear to be any such hindrance at the sentence level.

#### *Word order in Middle Welsh periphrasis with gwneuthur*

One of the problems in reconciling the use of periphrastic *gwneuthur* in Middle Welsh with that of English concerns the structure of the periphrasis in terms of the order of the

(43) **gouyn a oruc** Gwrhyr idi  
**ask-VN PT do-3SG.PRET1** Gwrhyr her  
 ‘Gwrhyr asked her’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* 848)

(44) sef **a oruc** hi **galw** y chymar attei  
 it.is **PT do-3SG.PRET1** she **call-VN** her husband to.her  
 ‘She called her husband to her’; literally, ‘what she did was call her husband to her’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* 15)

(45) **gwr a aeth** gatraeth gan dyd  
**man PT go-3SG.PRET** Catraeth with day  
 ‘a man went to Catraeth at daybreak’ (Y Gododdin 97)

(46) **Kynan kat diffret am arllifeis** ket  
**Kynan battle defence PT-me gave-3SG.PRET** gift  
 ‘Kynan, our defence in battle, gave me a gift’  
 (Taliesin, *Trawsganu Kynan Garwyn mab Brochfael* 1)

The difference between the ‘abnormal’ and the ‘normal’ word orders is particularly clear at example (48), with Taliesin’s allusion to – or at least similarity to – *Y Gododdin*. The subject comes after the verb in (48), where the sentence has normal word order, in contrast with the example above from *Y Gododdin* in (45), where the subject is fronted in abnormal order.

- (48) **arwyre**                      **gwyr** katraeth gan dyd  
**set-out-3SG.PRET men** Catraeth with day  
 ‘men set out to Catraeth at daybreak’ (Taliesin, 2.1)

The description of ‘the abnormal order where the verb is preceded by the subject or object’ (D. S. Evans 1964: 172), clearly works for these examples from Aneirin and Taliesin. It does not, however, explain the periphrastic sentences found in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and other narratives, where it is not the subject or the object that comes before the inflected form of *gwneuthur*, but the verbal noun. Willis (1998: 4) widens the scope of the ‘abnormal’ word order and describes the ‘abnormal sentence’ as when ‘the verb is preceded by some phrasal constituent and a preverbal particle’. This is broad enough to include the structure of the periphrastic sentences in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, since it does not restrict it to the fronting of the subject or the object. It may be that this problem could be resolved if these Middle Welsh examples in the *Mabinogion* were classified as types of focalisation in contrast with the unmarked word order of the Modern Welsh example above at (23). Focalisation through fronting is a standard feature of Modern Welsh and it shows great flexibility in which sentence constituent can be fronted. Even in formal Modern Welsh it is possible to focalise the lexical verb by fronting it as a verbal noun (S. J. Williams 1980: 167). Example (20) above, for instance, shows the fronting of verbal nouns for emphasis in Modern Welsh.

Such flexible fronting is also found in Cornish. Thomas (1992a: 351-2), for instance, says this is possible in Cornish for ‘any major constituent of the sentence’, such as the subject, an adverb, an object or the verb. If it is the verb that is fronted, the uninflected lexical verb (in the form of the verbal noun) is followed by an inflected form of the auxiliary verb *gruthyl* ‘do’ in a relative clause introduced by the relative particle *a*, as his example shows (A. R. Thomas 1992a: 352):

- (49) **Redya**    **a wre**  
**read-VN PT do-3SG.PAST**  
 ‘he was reading’

(My gloss based on his; his translation)

If something other than the verb is fronted, the verbal noun follows the inflected form of the auxiliary verb *gruthyl* ‘do’ and the subject (A. R. Thomas 1992a: 356):

- (50) **omma ny**            **wreugh**            why **tryge**  
 here    NEG.PT **do-2PL.PRES** you **live-VN**  
 ‘here you will not live’

(My gloss based on his; his translation)

This forms a close parallel with the word order options of the Middle Welsh examples, and so the internal order of the periphrastic construction that appears reversed in comparison with

the English order is likely to be a Brythonic feature, rather than being purely a Middle Welsh one. This difference in order would not undermine the validity of the Celtic Hypothesis as long as the Brythonic language had the auxiliary before the verbal noun during the period of early contact with English. However, since I have not found periphrasis in the earliest texts, this issue cannot be resolved in this way.

While it is not my task to assist the Celtic Hypothesis but simply to evaluate it, there is one avenue the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis might like to explore. I suggest that, surprisingly, this problem may be addressed by considering the difference in genre between those Middle Welsh texts with periphrastic *gwneuthur* and those without.

### *Genre*

Middle Welsh texts often show ‘abnormal’ word order and this includes the earliest verse from the North and the later, prose texts of the West and South West. The main difference in sentence structure between these two groups of texts is that the ‘abnormal’ sentences in the North do not show periphrasis with *gwneuthur*, while those from further south do. Where a text has periphrasis in the ‘abnormal’ order, the verbal noun is fronted; where there is ‘abnormal’ word order with no periphrasis, something else is fronted. It is a fault in the Celtic Hypothesis that the uneven variations in the evidence are usually not acknowledged. I ruled out date and questioned dialect region as possible causes for the absence or presence of periphrasis. It seems that fronting plays a part in the presence or absence of periphrasis and that the genre of a text may determine what is focalised by fronting.

In the Middle Welsh *Mabinogion* tales I analysed, namely *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* and a fronted verbal noun is common. It may be significant that they are prose narratives. The periphrastic construction in which the lexical verb is fronted may be a stylistic device typical of narratives that recount stories containing a series of events and actions. Significantly, this structure is used most often with particular verbs, for instance ‘go’ and ‘say’, and it often occurs at prominent moments in the narrative. These prominent moments may mark important transitions, and it is noticeable that some translators of the *Mabinogion*, Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (2000), often make paragraph breaks at these moments. If this is a literary device for focalising actions, this may explain why it occurs in the quest and adventure tales of the *Mabinogion* and in the more discursive later section of the chronicle *Brut y Tywysigion*.

By contrast, in the early, northern poems, which tend to be elegiac or lyrical, it is not action that is the focus. The focus in *Y Gododdin* is on the man glorified in his particular stanza. Since the action of *Y Gododdin* is practically the same for each of the men – all of them went to Catraeth and died there – it is understandable that it is the subject of the sentence that is emphasized. Descriptive passages are important in some of the poems, and indeed in some passages in the tales, but these descriptive passages rarely feature action verbs and so there is

no need for the fronting of the verbal noun and there is no periphrasis there. In fact, these passages often do not contain any verbs at all.

If the ‘abnormal’ word order of the Middle Welsh periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* and a fronted verbal noun were only a literary device, it would be unlikely to have influenced early English speech. If, however, periphrasis with *gwneuthur* was also a feature of the early Brythonic spoken language, and if fronting of various sentence constituents was as flexible then as it is in Modern Welsh, then early Brythonic periphrasis with ‘do’ may have had an unmarked deep structure that allowed the auxiliary to occur before the lexical verb. And this would allow the Celtic Hypothesis to claim that Brythonic periphrastic ‘do’ was imposed on early English with the internal order of its constituents in the order in which it occur in English.

However, if proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis wish to explore this avenue, they will need to take into account the fact that the idea that the Middle Welsh change in word order is a matter of focalisation is rejected by Willis (1998), who explains that it is the ‘mixed sentence’ rather than the ‘abnormal sentence’ that has ‘some contrastively focused constituent [...] placed in preverbal position’ (1998: 4). The ‘mixed’ order is a standard construction in all stages and all registers of Welsh (Willis 1998: 5), and yet the word order of VN + PT + *gwneuthur* is claimed not to be. Example (20) above shows that it is nonetheless a valid construction.

This discussion of the date, region and genre differences reflected in the examples of the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* in Middle Welsh texts shows several problems with the Celtic Hypothesis that the Brythonic language may have influenced the rise of *do*-periphrasis in early English. The uneven spread of the evidence from Middle Welsh brings to the fore the problem in taking selective examples of periphrastic *gwneuthur* to support the Celtic Hypothesis. The main flaw, however, is the insistence on the English South West as the point of language contact at which the Brythonic construction was imposed on early English. The reasoning behind this insistence is faulty and it goes against recent theories of language change in contact situations.

## Section 6: Conclusion

Standard explanations for the origin of English periphrasis with *do* have not been overwhelmingly convincing. The proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis have drawn attention to certain flaws in these explanations and have attempted to improve on them by arguing for Brythonic influence. I looked at different aspects of their arguments and evaluated them according to the evidence and to contact theory.

I conclude that the Celtic Hypothesis may have merit because of the plausibility of the claim that the periphrastic construction arose in the spoken language of the Old English period in the South due to imposition from Brythonic speakers learning English as a second language.



This plausibility rests on the construction falling within the range of linguistic features that are likely to be imposed according to recent contact theory and because the language contact situation in the south of England would have provided an appropriate context for this imposition to have occurred. This means that the Celtic Hypothesis cannot be ruled unlikely on theoretical grounds.

However, there are several major problems in the claims and arguments put forward by the proponents of the hypothesis. Firstly, some of them have tended to oversimplify the evidence at the risk of misrepresenting it. For instance, the complication with the Middle Welsh evidence in that it is not found in all genres, dates or regions is not something that is discussed. (Van der Auwera and Genée (2002) do touch on this, but they evaluate the hypothesis rather than being proponents of it.) Secondly, the theoretical basis of the hypothesis as claimed is not in accordance with modern language contact theories. There appears to be no awareness of van Coetsem's (1988, 1995, 2000) works, and of concern is the misunderstanding of Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) work when it is cited and even quoted. As I outlined in Chapter 2, Thomason and Kaufman show that large group shift after a long period of contact typically leads to little or no interference (1988: 41, 119-20), while large group shift over a short period with little access to target language speakers leads to much interference (1988: 41-7). It is generally apparent from the scholarly literature supporting the Celtic Hypothesis that Brythonic influence on the origin of periphrastic *do* in English is supposed to have occurred due to a long period of language contact. This a fundamental flaw. Thirdly, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto's (2008) claim that the conservative dialect of Somerset and Wiltshire is evidence that *do*-periphrasis began there is simply illogical. The syntax and semantics of the periphrasis in that dialect may reflect the syntax and semantics of the earliest English construction, but that is irrelevant to its origin. As for their method of using modern language contact situations as indirect evidence of the medieval English and Brythonic interaction, I would like to point out that Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 121-2) warn that the outcome of similar contact situations cannot be predicted, and these are by no means similar contact situations. While historical and comparative linguistics has success in determining earlier stages of phonology and morphology, and even some success with syntax, language contact situations have complex social forces that cannot be fully determined. The idea that the modern Celtic Englishes can elucidate the outcomes of early Brythonic and early English language contact situations may be unsustainable. Keller's (1925: 55-6) description of the outcome of the language contact between the Germans and Wends, mentioned in the next chapter, may be more applicable than that of the modern English and Welsh.

I also see it as a problem that many proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis – Poussa (1990) is one exception – disregard contributing factors that are not specific to their own hypothesis. Even if the Celtic Hypothesis is considered viable as an explanation for the origin of the English *do*-construction, it is also likely that English periphrasis with *do* reflects a Germanic tendency even if not actually an inherited construction. It is likely, too, that the English periphrastic construction was facilitated by the developing Germanic tendency to create constructions with other auxiliaries. The idea that the semantics of *do* as a basic, vague

expression of an action may also contribute, particularly because the actual lexical item has not also been imposed from the periphrastic construction in Brythonic, but only the concept. It is important to remember here that *do* was not the only verb that began to be used periphrastically in Middle English: *gan*, for instance, had a significant impact in some areas. For instance, Ellegård points out that the manuscripts of *King Horn* that do not have periphrastic *do* have periphrastic *gan* instead (1953: 75). The proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis have restricted their scope on the basis of the later success of periphrastic *do*, but this later development is independent of the origin. They may find it worth their while to widen their scope to include any periphrastic constructions that may have been influenced by the Brythonic languages. At the very least, the elimination of illogical assumption and unsound theories will have to be resolved before the hypothesis that Brythonic influence was at the heart of the origin of English *do*-periphrasis can be accepted.

## Chapter 5: The progressive construction *be + -ing*

*Cassio: I'faith, sweet love, I was coming to your house.*

*Bianca: And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.*

(Shakespeare, *Othello* 3.4.168–9)

### Introduction

The Progressive<sup>22</sup> construction, *be + -ing*, also known as the continuous or expanded form, is a characteristic linguistic feature of the Modern English language. It contrasts with the simple form to express a difference in aspect, for instance *I am writing* contrasting with *I write*. The construction is sometimes found in Middle English with a progressive sense, but the lack of consistency in its use indicates that it was not fully grammaticalised<sup>23</sup> at this stage – grammaticalisation was not established until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Brunner 1962: 88-9, Denison 1993: 407-8, Van der Wurff 1997: 168). It is disputed whether the construction existed in Old English. Proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis argue that the Progressive construction in English arose under the influence of language contact with Brythonic Celtic, on the grounds that the construction was not inherited from the Germanic background and that the Celtic languages have a construction parallel in structure and meaning.

Comrie (1976: 12, 25) clarifies the relationship between the three terms for the construction: the ‘progressive’ is a subcategory of the ‘continuous’, and the ‘continuous’ is a subcategory of the ‘imperfective’. He explains that ‘progressiveness is the combination of continuousness with nonstativity’, and he gives this example of the Progressive: *John was reading* (1976: 12).<sup>24</sup> The continuous he explains as being a non-habitual category of the imperfective (1976: 26). Ljung (1980: 6) similarly describes the progressive as ‘a way of looking imperfectively at dynamic situations’, and the reason he gives for the usual avoidance of the English Progressive with stative verbs is that they are already associated with imperfectivity (1980: 157). He says that when the Progressive *is* used with a stative verb, it may have a pragmatic function or even a stylistic function (1980: 20, 84-5). Similarly, Comrie explains that in English stative verbs can be used nonstatively in the Progressive to indicate a temporary state (1976: 37), but, he explains, ‘in English, the meaning of the Progressive has extended well beyond the original definition of progressivity as the combination of continuous meaning and nonstativity’ (Comrie 1976: 37-8). For instance, the Progressive can also be used for emotive

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<sup>22</sup> I follow Comrie (1976: 10) in giving a capital letter to language-specific names of tense/mood/aspect forms in this chapter because of the possible confusion between progressive as a general aspectual concept and the specific English Progressive construction.

<sup>23</sup> Zarranz (2017: note 1) provides a useful definition of the term ‘grammaticalisation’: ‘a form has fully acquired the grammatical status in the language rather than just being a stylistic variant’.

<sup>24</sup> Comrie (1976: 13) explains that ‘states are static [...] whereas events and processes are dynamic [...] events are dynamic situations viewed as a complete whole (perfectively), whereas processes are dynamic situations viewed in progress, from within (imperfectively)’. ‘Stative’ verbs typically express a state, e.g. *stand, know*; ‘dynamic’ verbs typically express a dynamic events or processes, e.g. *run, speak* (cf. Comrie 1976: 36-7).

effect and to express when someone is imagining things, e.g. *I've only had six whiskies and already I'm seeing pink elephants* (Comrie 1976: 37). The fact that even stative verbs can occur in the Progressive shows that it has semantic connotations that go beyond imperfective aspect. In Standard Modern English the choice between using the Progressive form or the Simple one is constrained by various parameters (Ljung 1980: 157), and sentences can appear ungrammatical if the wrong form is chosen. In this respect, the Progressive is a central part of Standard Modern English verbal semantics. The importance of the distinction between progressive or non-progressive aspect in English contrasts with the progressives in languages such as Italian and Spanish, which have a progressive construction that is used optionally (Comrie 1976: 33).

Not only does the Progressive in Modern English show a wide semantic range, but it also occurs in most of the tense/voice combinations, although in some varieties of English it struggles with the longer combinations in the passive.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, according to Comrie (1976: 71), it is more common among the Indo-European languages to have an aspectual distinction only in the past. For most English verbs it is possible to contrast aspectual categories of the Simple Form with the Progressive in various tense and voice combinations; aspect can also be contrasted in different moods with the addition of a modal or quasi-modal verb.

Tense	Aspect	Active	Passive
Present	Simple form	I eat (e.g. chocolate every day)	I am eaten (e.g. by mosquitos every night)
	Progressive	I am eating (e.g. a banana just now)	I am being eaten (e.g. by a boa constrictor just now)
Past	Simple form	I ate	I was eaten
	Progressive	I was eating	I was being eaten
Present Perfect	Simple form	I have eaten	I have been eaten
	Progressive	I have been eating	?I have been being eaten
Past Perfect	Simple form	I had eaten	I had been eaten
	Progressive	I had been eating	?I had been being eaten
Future	Simple form	I will eat	I will be eaten
	Progressive	I will be eating	?I will be being eaten
Future Perfect	Simple form	I will have eaten	I will have been eaten
	Progressive	I will have been eating	?I will have been being eaten

Table 5.1: The contrast between the Simple and Progressive forms of the Modern English verbs

It is common for languages to have some form of aspectual system to contrast imperfective with perfective, temporary with habitual etc. In some of the Indo-European languages there are several past ‘tenses’<sup>26</sup> that differ according to aspect. For instance, in Latin the Imperfect expresses imperfective, habitual, repeated, ingressive, conative etc. events in the past in

<sup>25</sup> Cynthia Allen, personal communication 12/7/2017, informs me that the queried forms in Table 5.1 are more acceptable in American English than in British or Australian English for phonological reasons.

<sup>26</sup> Comrie (1976: 97) explains that aspectually contrastive forms are sometimes called ‘tenses’ because of the ‘fusion of the morphological markers of aspect and other categories’ in some Indo-European languages.

contrast with the Perfect, but there is only one Present form. Modern German shows a similar pattern in having the Present, Imperfect and Perfect. Ancient Greek adds another past ‘tense’, the Aorist, to the Imperfect and Perfect, but again has only one form for the Present. It is clear from Table 5.2 that aspect can be contrasted in reference to past situations in Latin, Ancient Greek and Modern German, but not present situations. (This is true also in the passive voice in all three languages and in the middle voice in Ancient Greek, but I have omitted examples for reasons of space.)

	German	Latin	Ancient Greek
Present	ich schreibe ‘I write, I am writing’	ambulo ‘I walk, I am walking’	βαίνω ‘I go, I am going’
Imperfect	ich schrieb ‘I wrote, I used to write, I was writing’	ambulabam ‘I used to walk, I was walking’	ἔβαινον ‘I was going, I used to go, I started going’
Perfect	ich habe geschrieben ‘I wrote, I have written’	ambulavi ‘I walked, I have walked’	βέβηκα ‘I have gone’
Aorist	(ich schrieb ‘I wrote’)	(ambulavi ‘I walked’)	ἔβην ‘I went’

Table 5.2: The present and past forms of German, Latin and Ancient Greek verbs

Notice that different languages divide up the aspectual distinctions across the ‘tense’ forms in different ways (cf. Comrie 1976: 12-3). For instance, the preterite<sup>27</sup> is conveyed in English by the simple Past, e.g. *I ate*, in Latin by the Perfect *ambulavi* ‘I walked’, in Ancient Greek by the Aorist ἔβην ‘I went’, and Modern German by either the Imperfect *ich schrieb* or the Perfect *ich habe geschrieben* both of which can mean ‘I wrote’ (Hammer 1971: 205). In fact, the Latin *ambulavi* conveys the Perfect or Aorist according to grammatical context: in ‘primary sequence’ it corresponds with the English Present Perfect, and in ‘secondary sequence’ it corresponds to the English simple Past. Regardless of how these languages divide up their aspectual distinctions, they do not make a distinction for present time as far as the verbal paradigm is concerned. (Adverbs, among other things, may make this distinction if needed.)

Since the Progressive form is one of the cornerstones of the Modern English verbal system, it is significant that it is apparently in English alone of the Germanic languages that the construction has been fully grammaticalised. (I address this later in the chapter, but for the moment the assumption can stand.) There have been various explanations for how the construction originated, in form and in function. The period in which it arose is disputed, with some arguing that the Progressive can be found already in Old English texts, but others maintaining that it is only in the Middle English period that it became a verbal construction, rather than, say, a loose combination of a form of *be* with another, non-finite verb form. It is possible, for instance, that it arose language-internally from inherited, but non-grammaticalised Germanic features. However, because there is a construction in the Brythonic languages that is very similar to the Modern English Progressive, not only in conveying a progressive/imperfective/temporary meaning, but also in being formed from ‘be’

<sup>27</sup> I use the term ‘preterite’ to refer to situations located wholly in the past with non-resultative perfective aspect, although this could be considered an inadequate definition (Elsness 1997: 16, 27, 67, 72-6).

with a verbal noun (with a particle between), it has also been argued that the Progressive construction in English arose due to Brythonic influence during a period of language contact. Even in works that are not intending to support the Celtic Hypothesis, it is often noted that there is a progressive construction in the Brythonic languages, for instance by Comrie (1976: 99-100).

My aim in this chapter is to evaluate the arguments that the English Progressive construction was influenced by the Brythonic languages. As in the previous chapters, I shall present this analysis in six sections. In the first I outline what the evidence is for this construction in early English. The second section presents standard explanations for how the construction arose. In my third section I discuss the proposals put forward that Brythonic influenced early English with regard to the Progressive construction. The fourth section discusses the evidence for this construction in Brythonic. The fifth establishes whether the evidence and language contact theories support the hypothesis that Brythonic caused or contributed to the development of this construction in early English. The sixth section comes to a conclusion on the extent to which the Celtic Hypothesis is valid for this linguistic feature.

## *Part 1: The hypotheses*

### **Section 1: The progressive constructions *be* + non-finite verb in early English**

Non-finite verb forms used in conjunction with *be* can be found in Old English and Middle English texts before becoming fully grammaticalised as the Modern English Progressive. In Old English *be* can be combined with the present participle in *-ende*, but this is not always used as a formalised grammatical construction to express progressive aspect in the way that *be* + *-ing* is in Modern English (Mitchell & Robinson 1992: 110-1). In Middle English different stages can be found of the transition from a construction that is not yet grammaticalised towards the fully grammaticalised modern Progressive construction. During this period the non-finite verbal form of the construction may end in variants of *-ing* (originally a noun suffix) or variants of *-ende* (originally the present participle ending). By the late Middle English or early Modern English period the present participle and the gerund had merged in form to eventuate in *-ing* – the gerund as a verbalised de-verbal noun will be discussed in more detail below. While they were in the process of merging, it was not always clear from the form whether an abstract de-verbal noun is involved, a present participle or a gerund, and this may impact the explanations for the origin of the Progressive.

The following four examples, two from Middle English, (1) and (2), and two from Old English, (3) and (4), show some of the variation in form and function. At (1), Denison's (1993: 382) Middle English example shows a close parallel with the present-day English Progressive in having the verb *be* with a non-finite verb ending in *-ing/-yng*, with a meaning similar to the modern one:

- (1) þo Octa hit onderstod, þat heo **comyng were**  
 when Octa it understood that they **coming were**  
 ‘when Octa learnt that they were coming’

(Gloucester, *Chronicle A* 1.142.15, early 14<sup>th</sup> century)

(Denison’s gloss and translation)

This Middle English example of the *be* + *-ing* construction can be contrasted with the construction in the form *be* + *-and*, a variant of *-ende*, of the same period, as the following example from Mossé (1938b: 39) shows:

- (2) so faire ladies **are** none **lyuand**  
 such fair ladies **are** none **live-PRES.PART**  
 ‘no such fair ladies are living’

(Manning, *Chronicle* 602, mid-14<sup>th</sup> century)

(My gloss and translation)

The combination of *be* + *-ende* can be paralleled in Old English, although it does not necessarily form an aspectual construction. Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot (2000: 539) argue that the original meaning of most progressive constructions in Europe must have been stative, and so ‘actional’, rather than ‘aspectual’. They give an example from Old English that they say expresses a permanent, stative meaning, rather than a progressive meaning (2000: 531):

- (3) Sume **syndan creopende** on eorða mid eallum lichoman, swa swa wurmas doð  
 some **are creeping** on earth with whole body as as worms do  
 ‘Some (animals) creep on the earth with their body, just as worms do.’

(Ælfric, *Lives of the Saints* 1.11, 52-3, 10<sup>th</sup> century)

(Their gloss and translation)

Killie (2008) challenges Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot’s (2000) assertion that the construction originally had a stative Aktionsart as a locative that developed through a durative stage towards being more of a focalising progressive. While she agrees that the locative construction may have contributed to the origin of the English Progressive construction (2008: 69-70), she argues that its early stages are not primarily habitual (2008). By selecting a wider range of texts and analysing the data in more depth, she demonstrates that focalised progressives occur more frequently in all the periods studied than durative ones (2008: 79).

By contrast, Mitchell and Robinson (1992: 110-1) see the construction as conveying aspect: they show that in some examples the modern Progressive construction is foreshadowed by the combination of *be* with a participle in Old English and they give the following example of an action continuing for some time:

- (4)    ond hie þa ... **feohtende**                 **wæron**  
and they then    **fight-PRES.PART** **be-3PL.PAST**  
'and then they kept on fighting'                      (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* year 755)

In Sections 2 and 3 I outline theories of how the English Progressive arose from the non-grammaticalised combination of *be* and participle, verbal noun or gerund, but first there is more to be said about the forms that pre-date the grammaticalisation of the Progressive. I begin by tracing the nominal *-ing/-yng/-ung* suffix from Old English into Middle English, next I trace the participial *-ende* forms, and then finish with some examples of the confusion of the forms.

Old English inherited the productive Germanic endings *-ing* and *-ung* as a means of forming abstract action nouns from verbs (Dal 1952: 23-8), in other words, de-verbal nouns. Zehentner (2012: 43), citing Kluge (1926: 82-3), provides as examples Old English *leornung* ‘scholarliness’ from the verb *leornian* ‘to learn’ and Old Norse *menning* ‘education’ from the verb *menna* ‘to make someone a man, to become a man’. The endings were not originally interchangeable: while Middle High German formed such nouns only with *-ung* and North Germanic only with *-ing*, Old English used both *-ung* and *-ing*, according to the verb class the noun was formed from. Specifically, abstract nouns formed from Old English weak verbs of the 1<sup>st</sup> class took the suffix *-ing*, and those from weak verbs of the 2<sup>nd</sup> class used *-ung* (Dal 1952: 24, Wik 1973: 106, Zehentner 2012: 44-5). Dal gives an Old English example of the *-ung* ending preceded by a preposition as was common (1952: 38-9):

Since there were, according to Zehentner (2012: 45), more 2<sup>nd</sup> class weak verbs than 1<sup>st</sup> class ones, the *-ung* suffix was more common in Old English. Later, however, according to Wik (1973: 106), the form in *-ung* was ‘ousted’ by *-ing* between the late Old English and early Middle English periods (1973: 106). One possible reason for this is that, when the de-verbal noun ending eventually spread to strong verbs in late Old English, only the *-ing* form was used with them (Dal 1952: 26-7, Zehentner 2012: 46). In the West Saxon dialect the *-ing* ending overtook *-ung* by the tenth century except in conservative works, and *-ung* is no longer found from the middle of the thirteenth century (Dal 1952: 25-6). Both Brunner (1962: 351) and Miller (2012: 131-2) suggest that the success of the *-ing* form in Middle English at the expense of *-ung* may be the result of influence from the Scandinavian form *-ing*, although Dal



(1952: 26) is sceptical. The *-yng* ending is a variant spelling of the *-ing* ending and does not need further discussion.

### *The -ende/-ande/-inde ending*

Old English inherited the ending *-ende* for the present participle and, according to people such as Dal (1952: 16-8) and Mitchell and Robinson (1992: 110-1), it originally had an adjectival, rather than verbal, force. Dal (1952: 16-8) takes as the clearest indication that the Germanic present participle had no verbal force the fact that it was not capable of verbal government (*Rektion*) (1952: 19). For this reason, *be* with a present participle could sometimes be used with the same meaning as the simple verb, as this example from Mitchell and Robinson (1992: 110-1) shows:

- (6) þa wæs se cyning openlice **andettende** þam biscope  
then **be-3SG.PAST** the king openly **confess-PRES.PART** the bishop  
'Then the king openly confessed to the bishop'  
(Old English translation of Bede's *HE*; 10<sup>th</sup> century)

(My gloss; Mitchell and Robinson's translation)

Indeed, sometimes the adjectival nature of a participle is clearly dominant. The adjectival nature of the inherited Germanic present participle is indicated, Dal says, by the fact that it receives negation by means of a privative syllable, not by sentence negation (1952: 19-20). Denison explains that, in the following example, the word *unberinde* 'non-(child)bearing, barren' clearly functions as an adjective not as a verbal participle, since the negative prefix *un-* is an adjectival prefix, not one that can be used with a verbal participle (1993: 373):

- (7) his woreldes make **was** teames atold. and **unberinde**  
his world's mate **was** childbearing past and **unbearing**  
'his worldly partner was barren and past childbearing age'  
(*Trinity College Homilies* 125.17, early 13<sup>th</sup> century)

(Denison's gloss and translation)

Even though the inherited present participle was not primarily verbal, Smith (2007: 212n.6) points out that the example of the Latinate *syndan creopende* in Ælfric, *Lives of the Saints* 1.11, 52-3 (my example 3 above) has a combined verbal sense because of the substitute *do* at the end of the sentence. And Mitchell and Robinson (1992: 110-1) give the following example to show that the combination of *be* with a present participle in Old English can also indicate a continuous action:

- (8) ða ða se apostol þas lare **sprecende** wæs  
then then the apostle the teaching **speak-PRES.PART be-3SG.PAST**  
'while the apostle was explaining this teaching'.

(My gloss; Mitchell and Robinson's translation)

As well as variation in the more or less verbal function of the present participle with *be*, there is also variation in the form. Although the Old English form of the present participle ended in *-ende*, later forms of the present participle varied according to region in Middle English: South *-inde*, Midlands *-ende*, North *-and*, although the boundaries between the regions were blurred, as Brunner explains in his 1938 work on Middle English (Brunner 1963: 72). Mustanoja (1960: 585) gives the following example of the participle ending in *-ynde*:

- (9) hwanne ic iseo þer sum wrecchede **is cumynde** neyh inoh ic grede  
when I see there some wretched **is come-PRES.PART** near enough I cry  
'when I see someone/thing wretched is coming near, I cry loudly'  
(*The Owl and the Nightingale* 1220, Jesus Coll MS, 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century)

(My gloss and translation)

From examples (8) and (9) as well as some of the earlier ones, it can be seen that progressive aspect could be expressed by the combination of *be* and the present participle in Old and Middle English. It is not, however, universally accepted that the Standard Modern English Progressive construction is directly descended from these Old and Middle English uses. The development of the construction is particularly difficult to determine because of the period of transition in the Middle English period in which the de-verbal noun in *-ing* and the present participle in *-ende* became confused in both form and function.

### *Coalescence of the participial and nominal forms*

The difficulty in distinguishing between de-verbal nouns and participles begins when the nominal ending *-ing* ending is transferred to participles. According to Brunner (1963: 72), the first appearance of *-ing* as the ending of the present participle was in the South West, but by the fourteenth century, he says, participial *-ing* 'is found also in London, Kent and gradually in the Midlands'. For a period, the participle and the de-verbal noun had coalesced into a form in *-ing* in all England except the North (Brunner 1963: 72). Eventually, as these examples from Freeborn (1998: 191-3) show, *-ing* spread to the North and in (10) the ending occurs on *hynderyng*, a de-verbal noun, but in the same text the *-ing* ending occurs on present participles as well (11):

- (10) We comand [...] þat no man go armed [...] in distourbaunce [...], or **hynderyng**  
we command that no person go armed in disturbance or **hindering**  
of þe processiou of Corpore Christi  
of the procession of Body of Christ  
'we command that no-one should go armed in disturbance or hindering of the  
procession of Corpus Christi'  
(The York Proclamation for the *Corpus Christi* Plays, 1415)

- (11) good players, well arrayed & openly **spekyng**  
 good actors well arrayed and openly **speak-PRES.PART**  
 ‘good actors, costumed well and speaking openly’  
 (The York Proclamation for the *Corpus Christi Plays*, 1415)

Although neither of these examples (10, 11) taken from Freeborn contain a progressive construction, they show the coalescence of the forms of de-verbal nouns and present participles during the Middle English period. This process leads to the Modern English situation of the one form in *-ing* having various functions.

Fanego (1996: 32-3) makes a distinction between the de-verbal nouns in *-ing* and verbal gerunds in *-ing*, arguing that what is called a gerund was initially only an abstract de-verbal noun and that it only developed its verbal characteristics in Middle English. Alexiadou (2013: 127) distinguishes between them in this way: ‘verbal gerunds take accusative complements, while the complements of the nominal gerunds are introduced by the preposition “of”’. Gerunds can still be distinguished in this way in Modern English, as van der Wurff (1997: 166-8) shows, but, he explains, the gerunds in Middle English, rather than functioning as either a nominal or a verbal gerund, were a mix of nominal and verbal features and so could move with fluidity between the two functions (1997: 166-8, 78-82). Schütze (1997: 14) discusses the fluidity of syntactic categories in English that allows verbs to ‘enter into a great number of syntactic relationships with other phrases’ and refers to Ross’s (1972: 316) ‘quasi-continuum’ of syntactic categories showing that the present participle is more ‘volatile’ than the other participles as it lies closer on the continuum to verbs. What is important for my purposes is not so much whether an *-ing* form has nominal or verbal features in a particular example, but whether the form *-ing* at that particular period had the *potential* to be used with a verbal function. Unless the *-ing* form has verbal characteristics, it cannot be said to form a progressive construction with *be*, even when used in a phrase with *be*. For that reason, an understanding of the change in the semantic function of the *-ing* ending is important in tracing the origin and development of progressive constructions.

In Old English, the *-ing* form was still purely nominal and functioned in the same way as nouns that were not derived from verbs (Van der Wurff 1987: 168). Wik (1973: 107) gives the following example of a nominal, de-verbal noun in Old English:

- (12) þu wast þæt me næfre seo **gitsung** 7 seo gemægð þisses eorðlican anwealdes  
 you know that me never the **desire** and the power of.this earthly rule  
 forwel ne licode  
 very not pleased  
 ‘you know that desire and power of this earthly realm never greatly pleased me’  
 (Alfred(?), *Boethius* 17, late 9<sup>th</sup> to mid-10<sup>th</sup> century)

The nominal character of *gitsung*, the abstract noun formed from *gitsian* ‘covet, crave’, can be seen from its conjunction with *gemægð*, which is clearly a noun, and from the use of the

genitive *þisses eorðlican anwealdes*, rather than having a direct object that would have been possible with a more verbal gerund. The nominal character of the de-verbal noun is still very common in Middle English, and Fanego (1996: 32-3) gives this example of Middle English from the South of England of a nominal *-ing* form with a genitive subject:

- (13) he hadde i-trespased, and dredde the **chastisyng** of his maister  
 he had trespassed and dreaded the **chastising** of his master  
 ‘he had done wrong and dreaded the chastisement of his master’  
 (Trevisa, *Higden’s Polychronicon* 5.153, dated c. 1387)

In Modern English, such forms as *chastising* still occur as nouns with a genitive object, e.g. *Harsh chastising of children is counterproductive*, but it would more commonly be replaced with another, equally nominal, action noun, here *chastisement*. (Van der Wurff (1997: 178) explains that action nouns have become more common at the expense of nominal gerunds, probably because they sound better.) Denison (1993: 373-4), too, distinguishes between a nominal *-ing* form that takes a genitive object and the verbal ones that take an accusative object, and he points out that in the following Middle English example the word *pursuying* clearly has verbal status because it has a direct object (*chace*):

- (14) whan the enemyes **weren** ferr **pursuyng** the chace  
 when the enemies **were** far **pursuing** the chase  
 (Mandeville’s *Travels* 1.148-23, early 15<sup>th</sup> century)  
 (Denison’s gloss)

Fanego (1996: 32-3) explains that, before the participle and the de-verbal noun could merge in function as part of a progressive construction, they had to have verbal force, and this, she says, was still in the process of developing for both of them during Middle English.

It is possible, then, that the Modern English Progressive may have arisen through a process of the verbalisation of both the de-verbal noun and the participle as they merged. However, it is also considered that *be* with the present participle *-ende* could express progressive aspect to some extent both in Old and Middle English, which further complicates determining the origin of the construction.

## Section 2: Standard theories

Section 1 showed that the forms and functions of the forerunners of the Modern English Progressive are varied. The explanations for the origin and later development of the construction are equally so. Denison (1993: 371) asks these questions: (i) what was the function of the Old English construction *be* with a present participle in *-ende*?; and (ii) does the Modern English Progressive derive from it directly? He also poses the question of what their relationship is with the ‘prepositional construction’ shown by *he was on hunting*. In this section I describe various explanations for the origin of the Modern English Progressive

construction, some of which argue that the Old English combination of *be* and present participle could be used as a progressive construction and that the modern Progressive is directly derived from it; others agree that the Old English construction could have a progressive sense, but argue that the modern Progressive was derived from the de-verbal noun in *-ing*; and others again, such as Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot (2000), deny the Old English examples show a progressive construction at all.

If the Modern English Progressive is derived directly from the Old English construction of *be* with a present participle, it becomes less likely that it was influenced by contact with Brythonic. Furthermore, the structure of the English construction with a participle would not so closely parallel the construction in the Brythonic languages, which do not have participles. On the other hand, if the Modern English Progressive is *not* derived directly from the Old English construction, it is possible that Brythonic influence triggered the new construction. However, this is only one possible explanation. Before I discuss the Celtic Hypothesis for the origin of the Progressive in Section 3, there are other explanations to be explored. It may be that the construction arose as an internal development, perhaps as the de-verbal nouns became more verbal. Or, if it did not arise as a language-internal development, there may have been influences from other languages. Latin clearly played a large role in spreading the construction throughout the Old English religious texts. Whether that influence continued into Middle English is less clear. Anglo-Norman and Scandinavian have also been suggested as possible sources of influence on the Middle English progressive construction. I begin with the arguments that an early form of the construction arose in Old English based on the inherited Germanic present participle in *-ende*.

#### *Old English be and the present participle in -ende*

The first question to consider is whether the Modern English Progressive is directly inherited from Germanic. The verb ‘be’, ignoring the issue of the forms of the verb, and the present participle did, indeed, occur together in Germanic as it did in some other Indo-European languages. The question is whether they were regularly combined in a construction. Keller (1925: 62-3) cites Curme (1912) as seeing traces of a gerundial expression in Middle High German and Middle Dutch as evidence that the English gerund is a development of a West Germanic tendency. Keller himself notes that the Modern Low German Westfalian dialect has a very noticeable parallel with English and Colloquial Dutch (1925: 62-3). Another construction using the present participle was more common in the Germanic languages: English, like the other Germanic languages, can combine a present participle with a verb of motion, such as *run*, or state/rest, such as *sit*. Mustanoja (1960: 556-7) explains that the finite verb of motion ‘tends to become reduced into a mere auxiliary’ and gives this example from Middle English with *come* as the verb of motion:

- (15)    3if twa men oþer .iii. **coman ridend**                    to a tun  
           if two men or    3    **come ride-PRES.PART** to a town  
           ‘if two or three men ride towards a town’    (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* year 1137)

At first glance, it might seem likely that the similar construction of *be* and present participle was inherited in English as a standard Germanic feature, particularly since the combination of ‘be’ and the present participle is also found in the other Germanic languages at around the period that it appears in Old English. However, Mossé (1938a: 46-7) shows that the construction with ‘be’ in the Germanic languages is only typical of religious texts, and this is confirmed by Chambers and Wilkie (1970: 141) for early stages of German. According to Mossé (1938a: 46-7), the more traditional texts that are written in the previously pagan Germanic style show little or no evidence of the construction. He says, for instance, that the Old Saxon *Heliand*, an epic written in the pagan style, has only one sure example of the combination of a present participle with ‘be’ (1938a: 46), and he considers its rarity in the *Heliand* indicates that the writer deliberately avoids the construction as stylistically foreign to the tradition he writes in (1938a: 47). Similarly in the Old Scandinavian traditional texts, for instance in some of the Sagas, Mossé finds a small number of examples of the construction in contrast with the high number he find in the scholarly texts (1938a: 31-3). Crucially, in Old English traditional Germanic poetry, he says, there are only four examples of the construction and they are not totally clear-cut from an aspectual point of view (1938a: 73-4). On the basis of the evidence from works written in the traditional Germanic style, it appears that the combination of *be* with a present participle was not inherited by Old English as a commonly used construction from Germanic.

In his first volume, (1938a), Mossé argues that the combination of ‘be’ and a present participle arose in various Germanic languages due to external influence from the Bible and other religious texts written in Latin or, in the case of Gothic, in Greek. He says that, at a time when Old English was developing its prose literary language, the construction was introduced as a calque based on the Latin periphrasis of *esse* ‘be’ and present participle, which then spread to translations of Latin verbs in the passive voice and the deponent verbs<sup>28</sup> (1938a: 61-2). Mossé’s argument is that the glossators’ task of translating the Latin Vulgate Bible word-for-word created the challenge of dealing with the Latin periphrastic constructions of *esse* ‘be’ with a present participle (1938a: 54-5). Timofeeva (2010: 59) explains how glossing can create unnatural syntax: ‘Since glosses (and perhaps even a few translations) were not meant to be read as independent texts, their literalism was aimed at producing an equivalent word-for-word rendering that could explain foreign syntax and morphology by native means [...]’

Mossé’s (1938a: 54-5) example shows how the Latin phrase with *esse* ‘be’ and a present participle (16a) is translated as a literal interlinear gloss by combining *be* and the present participle in a way that is not native to Old English (16b):

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<sup>28</sup> In Latin the deponent verbs have active forms only for the present and future participles; their other verb inflections are passive in form. The perfective passive forms are a combination of the perfect passive participle with *esse* ‘be’. Regardless of form, a deponent verb always has an active meaning.

(16a) **si est intelligens aut requirens Deum**  
 if **be-3SG.PRES understand-PRES.PART** or **seek-PRES.PART** God

(16b) **hweðer sie ongeontende oððe soecende god**  
 if **be-SG.PRES.SUBJ understand-PRES.PART** or **seek-PRES.PART** God  
 ‘if he understands or seeks God’

(Psalm 13.2, MS Cotton Vespasian A 1, early 12<sup>th</sup> century)

(My glosses and translation based on Mossé’s)

Mossé explains that, once the combination of *be* and the present participle was taken on as a periphrastic calque in Old English, the concept of combining them could then be adapted to other situations where the Latin syntax had no parallel in Old English, particularly the passive voice. He gives the following example of a Latin passive verb (17a) translated by a calque of *be* and the past participle (17b) (1938a: 55-6):

(17a) **benedicatur**  
**bless-3SG.PRES.PASS**

(17b) **bið bledsad**  
**be-3SG.PRES bless-PAST.PART.PASS**  
 ‘he is blessed’

(Psalm 127.4, MS Cotton Vespasian A 1, early 12<sup>th</sup> century)

(My glosses and translation based on Mossé’s)

This analogical extension from use of the present active participle to using the past passive participle indicates the two-word calques had become part of the glossators’ stock-in-trade that could be used not just for a word-by-word gloss but could express one-word Latin passive forms as well. It could also be used to express one-word Latin active forms, and Mossé shows that the calque became particularly useful in expressing duration by identifying 30 examples of its use in glossing a Latin (active) Imperfect in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, for example *John* 18.16 *stabat : uæs stondende* ‘was standing’ (1938a: 58-9). As Mossé (1938a: 57) says, this progressive periphrasis was a useful turn of phrase that became a common translation practice and a style that lasted in schools and monasteries until the end of the Old English period. However, Mossé (1938a: 56-7) explains that the calques could be overused and used in inappropriate ways. For instance, Latin deponent verbs in the Perfect, formed by *esse* ‘be’ with the Perfect participle, were calqued as periphrastic, two-word glosses, even though they would have been translated more accurately by a simple, one-word, active form in Old English (1938a: 56-7). Denison (1993: 382), making a similar point, gives the following example of an Old English translation (18b) of a Latin deponent verb in the Perfect (18a):

- (18a) ... consecutus est ...  
follow.PERF.PART.DEPON be-3SG [Together = Perfect Active Indicative]
- (18b) and hraðe þa gefremednesse ðære arfæstan bene wæs fylgende  
and quickly then/the fulfilment the pious prayer (GEN) was following  
'and fulfilment of the pious prayer followed rapidly'  
(Old English translation of *Bede* 1 4.32.7)

But it was not only the glossators that overused the construction *be* with a present or past participle: the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, says Mossé (1938a: 62-3), is overly literal and employs Latin constructions that are unnatural to English, and Bately (1988: 118) agrees that the unidiomatic, Latinate style of this text is extreme. Even original prose writing could show an over-enthusiasm for using the calques, for example the tenth-century *Blickling Homilies*, which is still very closely modelled on Latin religious texts (Mossé 1938a). Smith (2007: 208-11) agrees that the influence of Latin on the Old English construction of *be* and the present participle is clear, particularly in religious and historical works (2007: 213-4), and he draws attention to the glossing of deponent verbs in the *Vespasian Psalter* by the use of calques. He gives examples of similar calquing in the Old High German *Isador* (*locutus est : ist sprehhendi* 'is speaking') showing Latin influence (2007: 209-10 n. 4).

It is clear that the answer to the first of Denison's (1993: 371) questions regarding the origin of the English Progressive construction is that the Old English combination of *be* with the present participle *-ende* arose as a calque due to the glossators' need to translate two-word Latin expressions word-for-word in the glossing of Latin religious texts. Mossé argues that his analysis of the evidence from Old English writings up to the end of the tenth century proves the influence of the Vulgate, whether through translations or works inspired by the Scriptures (1938a: 61-2). This conclusion is generally accepted by others, including Denison (1993: 397), Mitchell and Robinson (1992: 110-1) and Visser (1963-1973: §1854). The strength of Mossé's argument lies in the wealth of his examples and his tracing of the



development from the glossators' need to translate word for word through to the integration of the construction into the repertoire of the great prose writers. In doing this, he shows that, although the construction began as a calque, it had become naturalised into the Old English written language by the end of the tenth century.

### *Middle English be and present participle in -ende*

This leaves Denison's (1993: 371) second question outstanding: does the Modern English progressive come from the Old English construction of *be* and the present participle in *-ende*? In the second volume of Mossé's (1938b) analysis of the periphrastic progressive construction, he argues that the Old English construction was carried directly through into Middle English and that it is the origin of the Modern English Progressive. By contrast, while Wik (1973: 111-2) agrees that there would have been some influence from Latin on the Old English written style, she states that there does not seem to be any direct influence on the later origin of the progressive form, arguing that 'only those "borrowings" that would fit already existing syntactic structures would have remained and developed in the English language'. These incompatible stances characterise the explanations offered for the origin of the English Progressive, since the theories can be categorised into those that see the Middle English construction as having developed directly from the construction in Old English and those that do not. But if the Middle English construction did not develop from the Old English one, did it arise as an internal development, or was it due to an external influence instead?

In his second volume Mossé (1938b) argues that the Old English forms based on *-ende* developed into *-ing* though phonological weakening of *-nd-* and *-ng-* to *-n-* in unstressed final syllables. This, he argues, led to the confusion and interchangeability of the endings of the present participle, the verbal noun and the infinitive (1938b: 87), and also of other types of word (1938b: 94-5). Among the examples Mossé gives of the variation between the endings *-nd(e)*, *-n(n)(e)* and *-ng(e)* (1938b: 88-95), the examples for *-ng-* used where *-nd-* would be expected include *waldinge* for *waldend* 'master' (Layamon, *Brut* A 3100) and *thousyng* for *thousand* (Kyng *Alisaunder* 2003-4), which he says van der Gaaf (1930: 203) points to as rhyming with the present participle *comyng* (Mossé 1938b: 95). Mossé (1938b: 95-6) disputes van Langenhove's (1925: 79) suggestion that this alternation is restricted only to participles, and he shows that it can also occur within town names (Mossé 1938b: 96-100); for instance, the name of Coppingford was spelled as *Copemaneforde* in 1086, *Copmandesford* in 1382 and *Coppynghford* in 1535 (1938b: 100). However, Dal (1952) explains that many of the examples Mossé relies on do not necessarily support his argument. For instance, she points out that the variation *-nd-/ng-/n* in town names he uses as evidence may be the result of mistaken folk etymology, particularly where there is association with the *-ing* of patronymic or other origin (1952: 11-2). While these problems reduce the strength of Mossé's argument, they do not by themselves challenge his basic premise that the modern progressive construction arose from the Old English use of the present participle in *-ende* with *be*.

Zehentner (2012: 78), too, argues that the progressive arose through language internal development as a purely native English construction. She points out that four factors may have led to it: *be* + adjective and the similar *be* + present participle; ambiguous appositive participles; verbs of motion or rest + present participle; and *be* + the agent noun in *-end* (Zehentner 2012: 78-80). She gives Mitchell's (1985: 279) Old English examples of agent nouns *he wæs ehtend + gen* 'he was a persecutor of' and *he wæs ehtende + gen* 'he was persecuting of' to show the similarity of form and meaning, and she cites Denison (1993: 399-400) among others. Denison (1993: 372) discusses these examples and other constructions that can be hard to distinguish from the present participle when used with *be*, and he points out that they differ in whether or not they have verbal force: the appositive use of the present participle has verbal force, but the adjectival use of the present participle and the Old English agent nouns in *-end* do not. Smith agrees that the agent noun in *-end* was sometimes confused with the present participle in late Old English, but argues that this was not the source of the progressive construction, since the confusion would have been only literary, and would not have made it into the spoken language, since most speakers of Old English would have been illiterate (2007: 212n.6). It is not easy to imagine how the written language of only a small section of the population – Timofeeva (2010: 9-11, 7) says only 1% would have been literate in Latin – could have influenced the spoken language so profoundly.

Dal (1952) disagrees with Mossé's theory on a number of points, and in particular rejects his premise. While she agrees that the present participle construction with *be* was very common in late Old English texts, she explains that, after the Norman invasion and the fall of the West-Saxon writing norms, the constructions influenced by Latin dropped out and that in early Middle English the present participle had nearly returned to the earlier, Germanic uses (1952: 23). Furthermore, she argues, the change from the *-ende* to the *-ing* form of the English present participle occurred through the substitution of a new morpheme, rather than through phonological developments (1952: 5, 15). Starting from the fact that the new participle appears with the same ending as the inherited verbal noun, Dal looks to see if there are starting points for the penetration of the de-verbal noun into the sphere of the present participle in Old English (1952: 15). Dal traces the development of the Old English nominal de-verbal abstract nouns ending in *-ing/-ung* as they entered the verbal system in Middle English as gerunds, verbal nouns that can occur as a noun and as a verb in English, a form she says has no parallel in the other Germanic languages (1952: 29). Her argument is that the *-ing/-ung* ending on participles arose from its use on the gerund (1952: 28). She sets out, then, to find out how and when the abstract verbal nouns ending in *-ing/-ung* become gerunds (1952: 28). She says it is a mistake to view the *-ing/-ung* form's ability to govern an accusative as the decisive point at which it becomes a gerund: the decisive moment is earlier on, when it enters the verbal system (1952: 33). This decisive point, she argues, is when it is possible to create an *-ing/-ung* form on any verb, in other words, when the *-ing* form systematically has the same status as the other verbal substantives, the infinitive and the participles (1952: 33). The ability to govern an accusative is a secondary consequence of this, she says (1952: 33).



cites Dal (1952) in a more positive light, although he claims the arguments that Celtic influenced the English Progressive are ‘difficult to sustain’ (2007: 224 n.15), on the grounds that prepositional locative expressions are found throughout Germanic, including Old English, e.g. *on hunttoþe*. In this regard, he differs significantly from Dal (1952). Nonetheless, Dal is one of the forerunners of Smith’s argument that the Progressive developed from the prepositional construction based on the de-verbal nouns in *-ing*.

### *The prepositional construction*

According to Dal (1952: 45), the *-ung/-ing* noun was most often used with a preposition and this is the construction she says became the Modern English Progressive construction. She explains that the construction with the preposition appears in Middle English texts from the end of the thirteenth century onwards, although not frequently, and it becomes more common in the fifteenth century, reaching its highest frequency in the middle of the seventeenth century (Dal 1952: 113). The construction without the preposition is also rare in the thirteenth century; it gained significant ground in the fourteenth century and its frequency increased more and more in the following century until modern times (Dal 1952: 113). Dal considers it significant that the most common preposition used in combination with the *-ung/-ing* noun is *on*, since its sense of a purely temporal relationship of events occurring simultaneously is also the basic meaning of the participial construction (1952: 44). She says that the prepositions *þurh* and *mid*, which have instrumental meaning, are also frequent (1952: 44). The preposition *in* is also found in early Middle English in this connection, e.g. *The childhood of Jesus* (dating around 1275) line 749 *þus was þe wrechche in mourning* (Dal 1952: 93). The preposition *in* began to oust *on* at this time and she agrees with others that this is perhaps because of influence from French *en* (1952: 44). In late Middle English the preposition *a* (reduced from *on/in*) occurs in writing, although she argues it would have been present in the spoken language much earlier (1952: 86). Evidence for this, she says, can be found in Scribe A of Layamon’s *Brut* (1952: 86). Elsewhere the same reduction occurs in already firmly established coinages like *a-lifue*, *a-bedde*, *a-foten*, and the forms *o live*, *a live* are found already before 1200 (Dal 1952: 86, 93). Dal explains that the modern construction *be + ing* without the preposition is to be viewed as a confusion of the gerundial construction and the participial one, but because of influence from the latter, the preposition could be omitted (Dal 1952: 100).

Smith himself argues that, from a semantic point of view, the Modern English Progressive is unlikely to have developed from the Old English construction *be* and present active participle, but is very likely to have done so from the Middle English locative construction ‘made up of the copular verb, a locative preposition (usually *on*) and a substantivized form of the verb’ (*be on -ing*) (2007: 205-7). He argues that popular theories that the English Progressive arose from a combination of the present participle construction and the locative prepositional one are mistaken (2007: 225-6). Instead, he argues, the Progressive arose out of the locative construction, but, since its early form with the preposition was repressed by Early Modern English grammarians (2007: 207), its locative meaning was transferred as

The argument that the Modern English Progressive arose from prepositional phrases containing a de-verbal noun in *-ung/-ing* has received important attention in recent decades. Since the de-verbal nouns in Old and early Middle English had a nominal, rather than a verbal force, they can be found with prepositions and, when combined with the copula, this would give a stative, durative sense that could then have transitioned into a progressive construction. Denison (1993: 387-92) discusses this at some length and gives the following examples from Old English (20) and Middle English (21):

- (Denison's glosses; my translations)

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As we have seen in other chapters, a construction that is rare in Old English but common in Middle English may have arisen in the spoken language, possibly due to Brythonic influence, and then become evident in written language only centuries later. I turn now to the arguments that the Modern English Progressive construction arose due to Brythonic influence.

### Section 3: The Celtic Hypothesis for *be* + *-ing*

#### *Early arguments*

The hypothesis that the English Progressive arose due to Brythonic influence may be currently popular, but it is not a new idea. Keller (1925) argues that the many close parallels between the Celtic and English constructions, including the Progressive, are due to the retention of Brythonic syntax as the conquered Britons were learning to speak English. Preusler (1938) continues this argument and situates the Progressive construction in the context of a number of other linguistic features of English that show similarities with Celtic languages, and in this way he significantly widens the scope of the Celtic Hypothesis. However, Dal's (1952) work is the first detailed analysis of the hypothesis that it was Celtic influence that introduced the progressive construction into early English. She addresses Mossé's (1938b) objection that the construction appears too late in English to be due to Celtic influence and argues that the construction entered the spoken language during the Old English period but was not accepted in the written language until the West Saxon literary norm was broken by the Norman invasion, a central premise of the Celtic Hypothesis. Braaten (1967) challenges more of Mossé's (1938b) arguments and adds his support to Dal's arguments. As the last of his points, Braaten says that the construction is more common in regions where Celtic languages used to be spoken or where people are bilingual. This is an argument, used also by Preusler, that forms the basis of some of the later works on the possible influence of Celtic on early English.

Keller (1925: 55-6, 61-6) argues that the English Progressive, what he calls the 'gerundial construction', arose in English due to influence from the Celtic languages because of the relationship between the Celtic and Germanic languages on British soil, not only immediately after their contact, but also subsequently (1925: 56). He draws attention to the similarity between the English and Celtic constructions expressing duration. For example, he says, Welsh *mae yn dysgu* parallels English *he is learning* exactly (1925: 61). (Actually, it does *not* parallel it exactly.) Keller explains that the use of the construction is a pronounced characteristic of the Celtic languages (1925: 63-5) and he gives examples from Zeuss's (1871) monumental work on the Celtic languages (1925: 66). In Welsh and Irish, he says, the nominal character of the verbal noun is so strong that it cannot govern an accusative object, but only a genitive one (1925: 64), and he claims that this is true of the early English de-verbal nouns. Similarly, he points out that the verbal noun used in conjunction with *yn* in Welsh can also take the place of the participle (1925: 63-4). Furthermore, he explains, the

relationship of the English gerund with the preposition *on* is the same as that in Welsh, since *yn dysgu* is the equivalent of *on (in, a) learning* (1925: 61). (Here they are indeed structurally parallel, since *yn* is, or is similar to, the preposition meaning ‘in’.) What Keller considers the most important point is that the Celtic languages could build a verbal noun on every verb, exactly as the English have been able to from about the fourteenth century (1925: 64). He points out that this formation of a verbal abstract is the main difference between the English verb and that of all the other Germanic languages (1925: 64). For this reason, he argues, the English construction was formed under the influence of the English-speaking Britons (1925: 66), suggesting that people like the Cornish writer Trevisa may have been instrumental (1925: 66).

Keller’s theory that the English Progressive construction had its origin in the Celtic, particularly Welsh, parallel construction was picked up by Preusler (1938, 1956: 327-34). He discusses the English gerund in *-ing* and the Progressive construction separately and also mentions related tendencies that may indicate Brythonic influence: the English nominalisation of clauses and the de-verbal noun taking a genitive object rather than an accusative. In his literature review, Preusler notes that the possibility of Celtic influence on English is rarely mentioned and that Keller (1925) seems to have been mostly ignored (1938: 178). More, he says, has been written on the influence from Celtic on Modern English of Ireland, Wales and America (1938: 178-9), and this foreshadows Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto’s study of the modern Celtic Englishes (2008) and the works edited by Tristram (1997a, 2000, 2003, 2006), among others.

For the first of his topics, Preusler argues that the development of the English gerund from a noun with a preposition to a verb with an object arose due to the parallel construction in Celtic (1938: 179-81). Taking his examples from Modern Welsh, he shows that the English and the Welsh constructions are very close, since they both occur after prepositions (1938: 179), and a genitive object follows the gerund (*-ing* form) or the verbal noun (1938: 179). Although it is no longer possible in Welsh to distinguish the case of the verbal noun’s object morphologically when the object is a noun due to early loss of endings, Preusler takes into account the facts that in Irish such objects are marked as genitive, and that in Welsh the pronominal object of a verbal noun is marked as possessive (1938: 179-81), which he believes is decisive confirmation (1938: 180). He gives the following example of a verbal noun with a genitive object (1938: 179-80):

- (22)    *daeth ef i mewn heb        i    neb        ei weld ef*  
           came he inside    without for anyone **his** see [**he**]  
           ‘he came in without anyone seeing him’

(My translations of his gloss and translation; the square brackets for the echo pronoun are his.)

Having discussed the English gerund, Preusler moves on logically to discuss the English Progressive. He argues that English is the only Germanic language with the distinction

between the periphrastic construction with progressive meaning and the simple, inflected form of the verb, and that Brythonic, too, has this same distinction (1938: 181). Nowadays, he says, the periphrastic, progressive construction is the most common form used today in spoken Welsh, while the simple form is particularly literary and most often has a future or conditional meaning respectively, giving the following example from Modern Colloquial Welsh (1938: 181):

- (23) yr wyf fi yn canu  
 PT am I at singing  
 ‘I sing, I am singing’

(My translation of his gloss; my translation of the Welsh)

In arguing his theory that the English progressive construction arose due to influence from Celtic, Preusler cites Koziol (1932: 116) as saying the use is very rare in the Midlands and the South until the fifteenth century, with a greater number of examples of it in Scottish texts, which Preusler presumes indicates a strong influence from Gaelic (1938: 181).

Dal’s (1952) work sets out the developments that led, firstly, to the change of the purely nominal de-verbal noun in *-ung/-ing* to a ‘gerundial participle’ (*Gerundialpartizip*) with verbal force and some of the functions of the original present participle and, secondly, to the change in the form and extended function of the original participle (1952: 105-6). She argues that the first stage in this development took place in the Old English period, but that is rarely attested in the written remains due to being of low register (1952: 52).

Dal agrees there is a strong parallel between the Celtic constructions and the English gerundial construction: Old English *be + on + gerund* and regional Modern English *to be a doing* (1952: 110). She also points out that similar Celtic influence is also found in the modern varieties of English in the Celtic language-speaking regions of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Here she refers to the examples of regional varieties of Modern English spoken in Scotland, Ireland and Wales given by Mossé (1938b: §§106-12), noting that Van Hamel (1912: 275) was the first to discuss this trait in Irish English (Dal 1952: 111-2). Here she, too, prefigures the analysis of the modern Celtic Englishes made by Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008).

Dal takes the suggestions of Keller (1925) and Preusler (1938) that the English Progressive construction arose due to influence from Celtic, which she considers convincing, and applies a more modern theoretical filter to their position to confirm its validity. As I indicated in Chapter 2, it might have been assumed that Dal’s model of language contact, dating as her work does to the 1950s, would be too outdated to be appropriate, but she has a better understanding of it than other scholars of the time, for instance Mossé (1938b), who dismiss the Celtic Hypothesis on theoretical grounds that are now outdated. Following Keller (1925), her model of the influence of the language of a subordinated people on the language of their rulers being found in syntax rather than in lexis (1952: 114-5) is compatible with Thomason



and Kaufman's (1988: 20-1) explanation of language change in contact situations and foreshadows van Coetsem's (1988) language gradient. Dal also states that the historical requirements for Celtic influence on the English language are met and explains that the contemporary re-evaluation of the historical and social changes that occurred during the early period of the Anglo-Saxon settlement indicates that a large proportion of the Celtic population, at least in the western regions of England, survived rather than being wiped out (1952: 115-6).

Dal's contribution to the Celtic Hypothesis differs from Keller's and Preusler in not focusing on the Celtic evidence but, rather, on the English. By showing how the Germanic abstract deverbal nouns formed by the *-ung/-ing* ending developed verbal qualities to become a gerund in the Old English spoken language, she presents the case that Brythonic influence not only occurred earlier than West Saxon writing seems to indicate but also did so in the prepositional structure most closely paralleling the Brythonic construction. By explaining that it was only when the West Saxon written standard was breached occasionally in the Old English northern texts (1952: 53-5) and then in the Middle English texts (1952: 108), she shows how Brythonic influence affected English from the period of earliest contact (1952: 112-3). Significantly, she points out, from the late Old English period on, when the construction begins to be used more frequently, the construction uses every-day language such as words for hunting and other things that would occur in the spoken language more often than in the written language (1952: 91-2). She says that even in the South there was likely to have been penetration of the *-ing/-ung* form into some syntactic constructions and a confusion of the forms *-ing/-ung* and *-ende* in every-day speech already in the Old English period (1952: 56). Less well-educated scribes are also helpful, she says, because their deviations from the written norm can give clues to the spoken language (1952: 57). Furthermore, Dal argues, there is enough evidence to show that the prepositional construction *on + -ung/-ing* form as the predicate with *be* dates to the Old English period, even though it so rarely occurs in the extant written material (1952: 94). For instance, in the Northumbrian Glosses there are many *-ing/-ung* gerunds used alongside the old form of the present participles as equivalent translations (1952: 53). Throughout the whole period of Middle English, the three constructions *was wepende*, *was weping* and *was on/a weping* are found side-by-side as syntactically equivalent (1952: 100-1), and she argues that this side-by-side usage is evidence to support her theory, because, she says, regional, cultural and social differences are not enough to account for all instances of it (1952: 73-5). She argues that because the Middle English gerund in *-ing* first occurs on words that must have been common in the spoken language, this form of the gerund must have belonged to the spoken language for a long time (1952: 65). Dal believes her analysis strengthens Keller's and Preusler's theories by showing that the gerund arose in the spoken language in the Old English period (1952: 108). However, she believes that Brythonic only influenced the first phase, the development of the gerundial participle, but not the second phase, the expansion of the *-ing* form as attributive, saying that here the Germanic participle lives on in a new form (Dal 1952: 110-5).

Shortly after Dal's (1952) work appeared, Celtic is again claimed to be the source of the Modern English Progressive construction: both Pokorny (1959) and Wagner (1959) discuss the parallel constructions in Celtic and English as setting these languages apart from the other Indo-European languages. A central feature of their arguments is the claim that the Hamito-Semitic languages closely parallel the Celtic languages, and they attribute the origin of the Modern English Progressive construction to Hamito-Semitic by way of contact with Celtic. This argument is also followed by Vennemann (2001). Since this would not have occurred in Britain and I have discussed theories of influence on Continental Celtic in an earlier chapter, I do not discuss their theories further. In fact, Wagner (1959) cannot be classed as a true proponent of the Celtic Hypothesis, since he argues that the progressive construction arose as an areal development, although in doing so he does argue for some Brythonic influence on early English.

Returning to the central arguments for the Celtic Hypothesis, Braaten (1967) discusses Mossé's (1938a) and Dal's (1952) works on the English progressive. Although he takes Mossé's (1938a: 132-200) point that the Old English periphrasis of *be* + *-ende/-inde/-ande* is likely due to close translations of Latin or Greek originals, he argues that many examples of this periphrasis express perfective aspect, rather than the durative aspect Mossé claims (Braaten 1967: 169-70). Indeed, Braaten disputes Mossé's interpretation of some of the examples as even being periphrastic and he suggests that some of what Mossé takes as present participles are better taken as predicative adjectives (1967: 170-1). He also takes issue with Mossé's view that the Old English periphrasis was the origin of the Modern English Progressive construction, saying that it is 'extremely doubtful' and that the Old English periphrasis died out in Middle English (1967: 173). Here Braaten picks up Dal's (1952) argument that the Norman invasion allowed the 'low colloquial' language to appear gradually in written texts and this brought to light the construction *ic wæs on huntunge* that, he says, may have been influenced by 'Cymric' [Welsh/Brythonic] (Braaten 1967: 173). The second half of Braaten's article supports Dal's main points. He points out that, because the Brythonic languages have no infinitive or participle, in trying to learn English the Britons would have had 'considerable difficulty in distinguishing between English participles, verbal nouns and infinitives' (1967: 175). For this reason, he says, 'they may have come to feel that the English verbal abstract in *-ung/-yng* was the form that corresponded most closely in meaning to their own verbal abstract', particularly because it could be governed by a preposition as the verbal noun was in 'Cymric' (1967: 175). As for the Old English periphrasis with the present participle in *-ende/-inde/-ande*, rather than explaining the construction as an attempt to convey progressive or continuous aspect, Braaten shows how it can be used stylistically for dramatic effect and gives examples from *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* where the status of the subject of the verb determines whether periphrasis is used (1967: 172). So, he explains, periphrasis is usually used 'if the subject of the verb is somebody very important like Our Lord, the Virgin Mary, an angel or an apostle, whereas ordinary people [...] have to content themselves with a simple verb form' (1967: 172). The less formal quality of the periphrastic form is also noted by Nickel (1966: 390).

On the whole, Braaten (1967) synthesizes the earlier arguments for the Celtic Hypothesis, focusing on Dal's (1952) refutation of Mossé's (1938a) argument and expressing it succinctly. Braaten concludes that there must have been some Celtic influence on the English Progressive construction, even if it was only indirectly 'as a catalyst strengthening tendencies already latent in Old English' (1967: 178). His last point is that the Progressive is more common in regions in which people are bilingual and in 'formerly Celtic-speaking areas' (Braaten 1967: 180). It is unfortunate that he does not specify what he means by 'formerly Celtic-speaking areas', given that much of the country had been Celtic speaking before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. His point does, however, open the way for the recent studies on the modern Celtic Englishes. Indeed, many of the examples, interpretations and arguments put forward by Keller, Preusler, Dal and Braaten are used by more recent proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis in relation to the question of the origin of the English progressive construction.

### *More recent arguments*

Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto (2008: 59) characterise the English *be* + *-ing* construction as 'one of the most often mentioned features of English grammar which may have its origins in the Celtic languages'. They note that there are strong parallels between the Celtic and the English constructions in both their formal structures and their semantic function, and particularly the semantic parallel of imperfectivity (2008: 65). Their position on the origin of the English progressive construction is that no new evidence is likely to be found (2008: 70). Their intention is, instead, to re-assess the evidence 'with a view to establishing as many indisputable facts as possible' (2008: 70). A central position in their argument is that English and the Celtic languages are unlike the modern European languages in having this progressive form, and they conclude that the Brythonic construction influenced the English progressive construction on the grounds that it is the one closest to the English one (2008: 68-71). After explaining that Brythonic speakers shifted to the English language in a contact situation that favoured this influence, they argue that there is additional support from regional dialects that use the construction extensively and from the shift in English to a more analytical syntax (2008: 70-1). They note Dal's (1952) explanation for the delay in written evidence of the influence as being that colloquial language can exist for centuries before it appears in the written language (2008: 66), and they agree that the progressive was probably used in the Old English period but was delayed in writing (2008: 71) 'because of the stifling influence of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition, which would have banned the use of the PF [progressive form] as a "vulgar" feature' (2008: 66). They differ, however, from Dal (1952) when they say, 'Where, in our view, the Celtic influence on the English PF is most manifest is in the way in which the English PF has evolved through a merger of originally distinct participial and verbal noun constructions.' (2008: 71).

In the hope that the use of the Progressive construction in the modern varieties of English that are influenced by the local Celtic languages can shed light on early Celtic influence, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto look at Irish, Scottish, Manx and Welsh varieties of Modern English.

They consider the use of the Progressive where more standard varieties would use the simple form to be a ‘striking feature’ of these varieties of English (2008: 176). Among their examples of the Progressive with verbs used in a stative sense (2008: 176-7), they give this one from Hebridean English taken from Sabban (1982: 275):

(24) And the people then **were having** plenty of potatoes and meal of their own

They state that the Progressive was also used with dynamic verbs to express habitual actions or states (2008: 177), as they show with the following example from Preuß (1999: 112) of Manx English:

(25) I remember my grandfather and old people that lived down the road there, they **be** all **walking** over to the chapel of a Sunday afternoon, and they **be going** again at night

In the Celtic Englishes the Progressive can also be combined with other auxiliaries to indicate habituality or futurity, although some of the uses, they explain, are found only in Irish English (2008: 177-9). In Irish English and Hebridean English the construction is also used to express an event or activity begun in the past and continuing into the present (2008: 181-2), as the following example from Irish English shows:

(26) he’s working over there, in some building he **is working** with a couple of weeks  
‘... has been working for a couple of weeks’

(Translation by Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto)

They suggest that the patterns of use of the Progressive in the Celtic Englishes show such striking similarities to those in the Celtic languages that there may be ‘a considerable degree of substratal influence’ from the Celtic languages (2008: 179). Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto show that the Progressive is used more frequently in Welsh English than in Standard English (2008: 180-1). They also find that the northern and north-western varieties of English and Lowland Scots also show a higher usage of the Progressive than Standard English (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 181, Paulasto 2006). Other than giving this brief summary of the influence of the Celtic languages on the use of the Progressive in the modern Celtic Englishes, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto do not indicate how this evidence supports their hypothesis that the early English progressive construction arose due to influence from early Brythonic languages.

In their arguments to promote the Celtic Hypothesis, Filppula, Klemola and Paulasto provide evidence from modern Celtic Englishes, while Keller, Preusler and Braaten give evidence from Modern Welsh. Mittendorf and Poppe (2000), by contrast, discuss Middle Welsh examples and so provide evidence that is substantially closer to, although still several centuries distant from, the Brythonic language of the period of the early contact between Brythonic and early English. However, Mittendorf and Poppe cannot be counted as proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, since their aim is to analyse the Middle Welsh

construction from a synchronic perspective and evaluate the hypothesis, rather than support it (2000: 120). In fact, they start from the position that Celtic contact is not necessary to explain the English Progressive (2000: 120). They give parallel examples to locate Middle Welsh both within the other Insular Celtic languages (2000: 117-8, 25-6, 37) and within the context of other European and non-European languages that use a periphrastic construction with both a progressive and locative sense (2000: 120-2), and explain that the English and Insular constructions are only unusual because of their ‘areal proximity’ and because the other Germanic languages do not ‘systematically’ make a distinction between progressive and non-progressive aspect (2000: 122).

Despite reducing the significance of the parallel between the English and Celtic progressive constructions, Mittendorf and Poppe provide a helpful list and categorisation of the Middle Welsh examples, with a discussion of their range across six TMA combinations and their functions (2000: 122-45), which clarifies the situation for future studies on this topic. They categorise the examples according to structure and syntactic function. One group of examples occurs in full as *bot* + *yn* + VN and can be used with aspectual function in a main clause or as a temporal frame in a subordinate clause often introduced by a temporal conjunction, such as *uol* ‘as’, for stylistic reasons such as focus (2000: 124-9, 36-7). Another group occurs as *yn* + VN without *bot*, which functions as a ‘sub-predicate’ or ‘participle’ (2000: 124-6). By providing this analysis and database, Mittendorf and Poppe contribute to the Celtic Hypothesis indirectly to a small extent by providing relevant examples.

## *Part 2: The evaluation*

### **Section 4: The Brythonic periphrastic construction with ‘be’**

As Mittendorf and Poppe (2000) show, there are progressive constructions with ‘be’, a prepositional aspect marker and a verbal noun in all the Celtic languages we have evidence for.<sup>29</sup> Rather than being called ‘progressive’ as the parallel English construction is, they are often called ‘periphrastic’, for instance by Awbery (1976: 13-9), Stephen Williams (1980: 114) and Press (1986: 138). In Modern Welsh the construction is very frequently used and, indeed, is the only construction for some tenses in colloquial or informal Modern Welsh. In literary Modern Welsh, by contrast, the inflected tenses are more common (King 1993: 139-40). The periphrastic construction with *bot* ‘be’ exists in Middle Welsh, although it is by no means common. However, of the uses of the verb *bot* in Middle Welsh, one of the most common functions is as an auxiliary in this periphrastic construction (D. S. Evans 1964: 138). The existence of both the periphrastic and the simple verbal structures in Middle Welsh has clearly carried over into the more conservative registers of Modern Welsh, although

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<sup>29</sup> Because of the complexity of the Brythonic verbal systems, I limit my discussion almost entirely to affirmative sentences. In some situations, negative and interrogative sentences differ from the affirmative ones only in the presence of appropriate sentence initial particles, but elsewhere the form of the verb may also be affected. Affirmative sentences by themselves should, however, be representative of the structure of the complete verbal system.

periphrasis has become the more common structure in the informal registers (Fife 1990: 2, 125, 308). ‘Be’-periphrasis is found in the other Brythonic languages, with *bos* ‘be’ in Cornish and *bezañ* ‘be’ in Breton, as well as in the Goedelic languages, and seems to be a fundamental Celtic feature.

Since Modern Welsh is often referred to as representative of the Brythonic languages, I begin my description with this. I then move on to Modern Breton and Middle Cornish as a counter-balance to the Modern Welsh and follow this up with a description of Middle Welsh. The particles associated with the periphrastic constructions with ‘be’ in the Brythonic languages also need to be considered. As Fife (1990: 291) points out, *bod/bot* is unlike the other auxiliaries in Welsh, since it is not directly combined with a verbal noun, but must be used with an aspect marker to form ‘a prepositional phrase’.

#### *Modern Welsh bod ‘be’ + yn + VN*

The Present, Imperfect and Future tenses of *bod* ‘be’ in conjunction with one or other of the pre-verbal aspect markers *yn* (progressive marker) or *wedi* (perfective marker) form six periphrastic indicative tenses in colloquial (spoken or informal) Modern Welsh: Present, Imperfect and Future with *yn*, and Perfect, Pluperfect and Future Perfect with *wedi*. Of these six, only the Future can also be formed non-periphrastically, since what was the Consuetudinal Present/Future in Middle Welsh now expresses future time. The Preterite is the only indicative tense that cannot be formed by ‘be’-periphrasis.

In contrast with Modern English, the periphrastic construction with ‘be’ in Modern Welsh does not convey imperfectivity solely through the periphrasis itself. ‘Be’-periphrasis conveys aspectual contrasts explicitly by means of the aspect markers (A. R. Thomas 1992b: 279). While the periphrastic Imperfect is necessarily imperfective because it is combined with the Imperfect form of *bod*, the periphrastic Present in colloquial Modern Welsh corresponds semantically not only to the English Progressive, but also to the simple Present (King 1993: 137). There is no other way of expressing the Present tense in colloquial Modern Welsh. King (1996a: 50) provides the following examples from colloquial Welsh of ‘be’-periphrasis in the Present (27), Imperfect (28) and Future (29) in the active indicative:

(27) **dw**                    **i ’n** trefnu            ngwyliau  
**be-1SG.PRES I PT** arrange-VN my.holidays  
 ‘I’m arranging my holidays’ or ‘I arrange my holidays’

(28) **o’n**                    **i ’n** trefnu            ngwyliau  
**be-1SG.IMPF I PT** arrange-VN my.holidays  
 ‘I was arranging my holidays’

- (29) **bydda**      **i 'n** trefnu      ngwyliau  
**be-1SG.FUT I PT** arrange-VN my.holidays  
 'I will arrange my holidays' or 'I'll be arranging my holidays'  
 (My glosses; his translations)

The Perfect, Pluperfect and Future Perfect are similarly formed periphrastically in colloquial Welsh. Whereas the equivalents to these three tenses in English use periphrasis with inflected forms of *have*, colloquial Welsh uses the same verbal constructions with *bod* as in sentences (27), (28) and (29) but with the perfective marker *wedi* instead of the progressive marker *yn*. Like the Future, and unlike the Present, Imperfect, Perfect, Pluperfect and Future Perfect, the Preterite can be expressed with an inflected lexical verb. If the Preterite *is* expressed periphrastically, it uses *gwneud* 'do', not *bod* 'be' as the auxiliary, as was shown in the previous chapter. King (1996b: 28-9) distinguishes between these two constructions by calling the first, non-periphrastic one 'Preterite I' and the second, periphrastic one 'Preterite II', but these terms should not be confused with the first and second preterite forms of Middle Welsh *gwneuthur*.

In contrast with the situation in colloquial Modern Welsh, in formal and literary Modern Welsh there are simple forms for the Present as there are in the Imperfect, where the lexical verb is inflected for tense and aspect. The Present can also convey a future sense. The literary forms tend to reflect an earlier form of the language, although do not necessarily reflect Middle Welsh. Awbery (1976: 6) gives the following examples of the Present (30) and Imperfect (31) in literary Modern Welsh:

- (30) **gwêl**              y dyn y ci  
**see-3SG.PRES** the man the dog  
 'the man sees the dog'
- (31) **gwelai**           y dyn y ci  
**see-3SG.IMPF** the man the dog  
 'the man kept seeing (was seeing) the dog'

(My glosses and translations based on hers)

#### *Modern Breton bezañ 'be' + PT + VN*

The verbal system in Modern Breton has been strongly influenced by French, particularly in its periphrastic tenses according to Ternes (1992: 408). Although usually 'finite verbs cannot appear in sentence-initial position in Breton', a finite verb can be sentence-initial if it is the copula with either a prepositional phrase or 'a progressive complement' with a progressive aspect marker, as in the following example, where *o* marks progressive aspect (Borsley, Rivero & Stephens 1996: 62):

- (32) **emañ** Anna **o** **lenn** al levr  
**be-3SG.PRES** Anna **PT read-VN** the book  
 ‘Anna is reading the book’  
 (My gloss based on theirs; their translation)

Ternes (1992: 408) draws a parallel between this progressive structure of an inflected form of *bezañ* in combination with what he calls the ‘present participle’ introduced by *o* and the English Progressive forms in *-ing* and gives the following example:

- (33) **emaint** **o** **c’hoari** kartoù  
**be-3PL.PRES PT play-VN** cards  
 ‘they are playing cards’

(My gloss based on his; his translation)

Russell (1995: 258), however, explains that there is not actually a present participle in the Celtic language, and this example (33) seems to have the same structure as in Welsh where progressive aspect is formed with an inflected form of *bod*, a pre-verbal particle and a verbal noun. This construction can, however, function as the equivalent of present participles found in other languages (Brekilien 1976: 104-5). Indeed, in Middle Breton it appears to have a participial rather than progressive sense (Hemon 1975: §171).

*Middle Cornish* *bos* ‘be’ + *PT* + *VN*

As in Middle Welsh, both simple and periphrastic verbal constructions with *bos* ‘be’ occur in Middle Cornish. Thomas (1992a: 349-50) gives the following examples of the verb *bos* in the simple present in unmarked word order (34) and where the subject is topicalised (35):

- (34) **Us** dour omma in oges?  
**be-3SG.PRES** water here in near  
 ‘is there water here close by?’
- (35) an dragon **yv** tebel vest  
 the dragon **be-3SG.PRES** evil animal  
 ‘the dragon is an evil animal’

(My glosses; his translations)

Sentences marked for progressive aspect use the periphrastic construction of *bos* ‘be’ with the progressive particle *ow* + *VN*, as this example shows (A. R. Thomas 1992a: 351):



- (36) **yma**                      **ow kelwel** ely  
**be-3SG.PRES PT call-VN** Elias  
 ‘he is calling Elias’

(My gloss and translation)

The periphrasis in (36) can be contrasted with the short form of a verb (37):

- (37) yn tresse dyth dybarth      **gvraf**                      yntre      an mor ha ’n      tyryw  
 in third day separation **do-1SG.PRES**              between the sea and the lands  
 ‘On the third day I make a separation Between the sea and the lands’  
(Ordinale de origine mundi 25-6)

(My gloss; translation by Norris (1859: 4-5))

*The Middle Welsh constructions: yn + VN with or without bot*

‘Be’-periphrasis in a progressive construction is not as common in Middle Welsh as it is in Modern Welsh, and not as common in early Middle Welsh as in late Middle Welsh. It does appear, however, to have been present in Old Welsh. According to Zeuss (1871: 1057-8), the oldest example of the construction in Welsh occurs in the Oxford glosses of the eighth or ninth century of Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* Book 1 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct.F.4.32 (O)): *hin cetlinau ir leill*, in which Zeuss identifies *hin* as the particle with *cetlinau* as the ‘infinitive’ as though forming a periphrastic present participle. However, the reading is not certain and Falileyev (2000: 156) calls it a ‘very difficult and uninterpreted gloss’. Russell (2017: 80-1), too, warns that the reading of this gloss at 39v19 (line 209) is controversial: the tentative readings could be *ingclinau ir leill* or *hincealinau ir leill* with the meaning ‘pursuing the others’. He does, however, identify *in* as a particle to indicate progressive aspect with the verbal noun in this context. It is, indeed, to be expected that the progressive construction was present in Old Welsh, since it is a structure common to the Insular Celtic languages.

When the verb *bot* ‘be’ is used as an auxiliary in a periphrastic progressive construction, it is usually used with the pre-verbal aspect particle *yn/y* for progressive aspect followed by a verbal noun (D. S. Evans 1964: 138). There are also examples of *yn + VN* used without *bot*, and these fall into three categories: a variant of the progressive construction in contexts where the copula is often omitted, with verbs of perception and a free-standing participial/gerundial construction. (Table 5.3 below gives the numbers of examples of the progressive, perception and free-standing constructions in a selection of Middle Welsh texts.)

Taking lines 751-952 of *Culhwch ac Olwen* as a sample, of the 93 instances of the verb *bot* ‘be’ in any form, there are only three instances of periphrasis with *bot* and a verbal noun in these 201 lines. The first instance (38) of periphrasis uses the Present tense of *bot* and occurs in a passage of direct speech. The other two (39) and (40) use the Imperfect of *bot* and occur

in passages of narrative action. Notice that the example of periphrasis at (38) has a clear continuous sense, while in (39) and (40) the periphrasis forms a subordinate temporal clause:

- (38) ys                      gwers yd **wyf**                      **yn keissaw** a olchei  
 be-PRES.IMPERS a.while PT **be-1SG.PRES PT seek-VN** who clean-3SG.IMP.F.SUBJ  
 uyg cledyf  
 my sword  
 ‘for a while I have been seeking someone to furbish my sword’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* 783-4)

- (39) **tra yttoed**                      vilwyr Arthur **yn ymlad**                      a ’r gaer, rwygaw o                      Gei  
**while be-3SG.IMP.F** soldiers Arthur PT **attack-VN** on the castle rend-VN from Cei  
 y uagwyr  
 the wall  
 ‘while Arthur’s soldiers attacked the castle, Cei broke through the wall’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* 925-7)

- (40) ac **ual yd oed**                      Gwythyr mab Greidawl dydgweith **yn kerdet** dros  
 and as PT **be-3SG.IMP.F** Gwythyr son Greidawl one-day PT **walk-VN** across  
 vynyd, y clywei                      leuein a gridua girat  
 mountain PT hear-3SG.IMP.F cry-VN and groan(-VN) bitter  
 ‘and as Gwythyr son of Greidawl was one day going over a mountain, he heard bitter  
 shouting and groaning’  
 (*Culhwch ac Olwen* 942-4)

These three examples use periphrasis in a temporal sense by emphasising the imperfective aspect; two of them (39) and (40) explicitly do so with their use of the conjunctions *tra* ‘while’ and *ual* ‘as’. Mittendorf and Poppe (2000: 127-8) highlight the function of the temporal clause in providing a ‘temporal frame for another verbal event’ and they see this as a distinct group of the function of the progressive construction in Middle Welsh. However, unlike in colloquial Modern Welsh, these periphrastic progressive forms are not the only way in Middle Welsh to express imperfective aspect. This is because of the wider range of inflections available for most verbs. For instance, the verbs *keissaw* (38), *ymlad* (39) and *kerdet* (40) could potentially also occur in the simple Imperfect, which also has imperfective aspect. Evans’s example for the simple, in other words, non-periphrastic, Imperfect tense is also in a temporal clause (1964: 109):

- (41) ual y **kyrchei**                      ef y bont  
 as PT **go-to-3SG.IMP.F** he the bridge  
 ‘as he was heading for the bridge’  
 (*White Book Mabinogion* 408.7; *Gereint uab Erbin* 16)  
 (My gloss; his translation)

The construction *yn* + VN dependent on a verb of perception also conveys progressive aspect because of the semantics of *yn* as an imperfective aspect marker or, as Ó Corráin (1997: 317-8) calls it, the ‘introspective’ marker. The following example shows both the framing progressive construction with *bot* + *yn* + VN and, in the main clause, a verb of perception, *welynt* ‘saw’, with *yn* + VN: ‘they saw a woman coming’. As is clear from the translation, this is a construction that parallels the English use of a participle in the same context.

- (42) ac wal y **bydynt** **yn eisted**, wynt a **welynt** gwreic [...]   
 and as PT **be-3PL.CONS.PAST** PT **sit-VN** they PT **see-3PL.IMP** woman   
**yn dyuot**   
**PT come-VN**   
 ‘and while they were sitting, they saw a woman [...] coming   
 (*Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, 203-205)

While the construction of *yn* + VN with a verb of perception is not technically a progressive construction, its use with a participial function adds to the complexity of the question of the origin of the English Progressive, if it arose due to Brythonic influence. It is worth noting here that Middle Breton, too, can convey the equivalent of a present participle by means of a particle/preposition and a verbal noun: with *ouz* ‘at, against’ after a verb of perception; otherwise with *en un* ‘in one’ (Hemon 1975). While neither of these constructions in Middle Breton can be called a progressive construction, they confirm that the constructions in Middle Welsh are a Brythonic feature.

Since both Middle Welsh and English can convey imperfectivity by means of a progressive construction and by means of a participial construction with a verb of perception, the question of whether the English construction was more likely to have arisen from the Old English participle in *-ende* or the de-verbal noun in *-ing* cannot be answered by ruling out one or other of the Brythonic structures as having had an effect.

The participial function of *yn* + VN does not only occur with a verb of perception. It frequently occurs as an independent structure, sometimes with a clear temporal sense and sometimes with a more gerundial sense of doing something as a means to an end. Although Table 5.3 appears to indicate that this use occurs more frequently than the progressive construction in the earlier texts, I suggest that the situation is more complex than the table seems to indicate. For instance, there is only one example of the participial construction of *yn* + VN in Jones’s (1955: 14-5) edition of *Brut y Tywysogyon* before the year 1000:

- (43) Ac y bu diruawr eira vis Mawrth, a meibon Idwal **yn gwledychu**   
 and PT was great snow month March PT sons Idwal **PT rule-VN**   
 ‘And there was much snow in the month of March when the sons of Idwal ruling’   
 (*Brut y Tywysogyon* 961 CE)

It is possible, however, that this particular example may be a calque influenced by the Latin text the chronicle is a translation of, rather than being a common construction of the period. The phrase *a meibon Idwal yn gwledychu* has the hallmarks of a Latin ablative absolute used for dating. A more idiomatic use of the construction is found in the following example:

- (44) ac ymordiwes a oruc ac ef **yn llad** gwarthec Kynnwas Kwrryuagyl  
and overtake-VN PT did and he **PT kill-VN** cattle Cynwas Cwryfagyl  
'and he overtook him as he was killing the cattle of Cynwas Cwryfagyl'  
(*Culhwch ac Olwen* 1100–1101)

Earlier examples of *yn* + VN without *bot* are as idiomatic, but they tend not to function as participles, but rather as a progressive construction. While they are structurally independent from an inflected verb such as *bot* or a verb of perception, I suggest they belong in the category of the typical progressive construction. I mentioned in Chapter 3 that there are some contexts in which Middle Welsh poetry omits the copula ‘be’, for instance in descriptive passages. Much of the earliest Middle Welsh poetry – some consider it to be Old Welsh – is descriptive. For instance, in the poem *Tristwch yn y Gwanwyn* there are nine instances where ‘be’ is ‘omitted’ from an English perspective. In a similar manner, in one of Taliesin’s poems authenticated by Ifor Williams (1968), for instance, the imperfective meaning is clear despite the absence of the verb *oedd*:

- (45) ar vn blyned vn **yn darwed** gwin a mall a med  
on one year one **PT pour-VN** wine and braggot and mead  
'over the course of one year, one man kept pouring wine, braggot beer and mead'  
(Taliesin 5 [BT 59], lines 1-2)

The other two instances in Taliesin's poems of independent *yn* + VN can be explained in the same way; in other words, they are not actually independent, but are examples of *bot* + *yn* + VN without the *bot*. In contrast with these early examples, the independent use of *yn* + VN typically have participial force.

The number of examples in the passages I analysed of these constructions with *yn* and the verbal noun are shown in Table 5.3 on the following page. It appears that the constructions become more frequent in the later texts, *Pwyll Pendueic Dyuet* and the years 1000 to 1103 of *Brut y Tywysogyon*, but the numbers are still low. Furthermore, the difference in dates between these two texts and that of *Culhwch ac Olwen* is too small to explain the difference in frequencies of the constructions.

Text	Number of lines	<i>bot</i> + <i>yn</i> + VN	Perception verb + <i>yn</i> + VN	Independent <i>yn</i> + VN
Taliesin's poems	455	1	2	3
Anonymous poems	131	0	0	1
<i>Brut y Tywysogyon</i> before 1000	268	0	0	1
<i>Brut y Tywysogyon</i> 1000-1103	496	7	1	4
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 1	200	2	0	6
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 2	227	2	2	1
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 3	202	3	1	1
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> Section 4	190	2	1	8
<i>Pwyll Penduic Dyuet</i>	654	12	6	2
Totals	Total: 2826	Total: 29	Total: 13	Total: 27

Table 5.3: Numbers of the construction *yn* and a verbal noun with *bot*, with a verb of perception and independent of another verb in a selection of Middle Welsh texts.

As in the Brythonic languages, distinctions between aspects can be expressed in the Goidelic Celtic languages (Ó Siadhail 1989: 177, 294). And as in Brythonic, a range of pre-verbal particles is used (Hendrick 2000: 24), for instance the Scots Gaelic particle *a* in the following example of a progressive construction given by Anderson (2006: 98):

- (46)    *bha*        *mi a' tighinn*  
           AUX:PST I    PREP coming  
           'I was coming'

(Anderson's gloss and translation)

It is perhaps for this reason that the northern and north-western varieties of English English and Lowland Scots also show a higher usage of the progressive construction than Standard English (Filppula, Klemola & Paulasto 2008: 181, Paulasto 2006).

The Insular Celtic languages are distinctive in their fully grammaticalised ability to convey aspectual distinctions by means of aspectual particles and a verbal noun (Comrie 1976: 99-100). Although my focus is on the progressive construction, the Insular Celtic languages, particularly in their later stages, make use of other aspectual particles to express such things as perfectivity (the 'after'-perfect) and ingressive imperfectivity ('on the point of doing'). Whereas the Celtic Hypothesis claims that Brythonic influence led to the creation of the English Progressive construction, it does not claim that Brythonic influence led to the restructuring of all of the aspectual constructions in English. Some of the syntactic features of

the modern Celtic Englishes, such as the ‘after’-perfect, do not appear to have emerged in early English. If English stands alone with the Celtic languages in having a progressive construction as a result of influence from Brythonic, it is strange that only part of the integrated Celtic aspectual system was imposed. In the next section I show that English shares some features with other Western European languages in making aspectual distinctions. I then consider whether the structure of the early English Progressive construction gives any indication of its origin.

## Section 5: The issues

### *The atypicality of the Progressive in English*

The Celtic Hypothesis relies on the idea that the English Progressive construction is atypical in the Germanic context. Although the parallels between the Welsh verbal noun and the English participle/gerund used with ‘be’ to express progressive aspect make it plausible that this syntactic structure was influenced by Brythonic, other Germanic languages, too, have periphrastic constructions signifying aspectual distinctions. In fact, English is not atypical in having a grammatical means of conveying progressive aspect, even if it is atypical in the extent to which the construction is grammaticalised. Other languages in the Germanic and Romance families have constructions for expressing progressivity or, more generally, imperfectivity. In fact, Thieroff (2000: 298) categorises English in with the standard Germanic and Romance languages and some of their regional variants, with Irish and some other languages of Europe in being able to express progressive aspect.<sup>30</sup>

Thieroff (2000: 294) states that the English Progressive construction ‘has progressed the furthest’, since it ‘can be combined with all tenses, including the perfect, and with the habitual periphrasis’. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, it is more common for languages to distinguish between perfective and imperfective (including progressive) only in the past than both in the past and the present (Comrie 1976: 71-2). It might then seem that English is alone in having fully grammaticalised the progressive. However, Thieroff states that English is closely followed by Icelandic, which has also fully grammaticalised the progressive (2000: 294). Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot (2000: 527) concur with this, and explain that the progressive in English and Icelandic, as well as Irish, can be seen to be fully grammaticalised from the fact that their progressive constructions ‘are the only tools available to express the notion of progressivity’. Wood (2015: 42), who states that ‘Icelandic has a very productive progressive construction’, cites this example from Jóhannsdóttir (2011: 6):

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<sup>30</sup> The complex Slavic aspectual systems are not relevant here, since they evolved independently from around the 400s to around the 800s (Andersen 2009: 138).

- (47) Jón **var að vinna** (þegar ég kom)  
 John **was to work** when I came  
 ‘John was working when I came.’

(Wood’s gloss and translation)

Jóhannsdóttir (2011: 14) herself specifies that, of the three progressive constructions in Icelandic, it is the ‘infinitival’ progressive construction that is fully grammaticalised, while the ‘present participle’ progressive and the ‘posture verb’ – more on this below – progressive constructions are not. She explains that the present participle progressive, the Icelandic construction that most closely resembles the English Progressive, can only be used for iterative, not continuous, meanings and functions as a subsection of the habitual (Jóhannsdóttir 2011: 155-7).

In another respect, English may seem to be atypical, since the Progressive construction is obligatory in certain contexts (Comrie 1976: 33). For instance, Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot (2000: 518) contrast the periphrastic progressive construction with the posture verb *zit* ‘sits’ (48) in Dutch with the habitual sense (implicit in the question that elicited the example) of the simple form of the verb (50):

- (48) ze **zit te werken**  
 she **sits to work**  
 ‘she is working’ (right now)

- (49) **maakt** ze het huis schoon  
**makes** she the house clean  
 ‘she is cleaning the house’ (every Saturday morning)

(Bertinetto, Ebert and de Groot’s glosses and translations)

However, they explain that, unlike in English, in Dutch the simple verb can be used wherever the progressive can, so (49) could also include a progressive meaning (2000: 518), and so the use of the periphrastic progressive construction is optional in Dutch. This is also the case with the periphrastic progressive constructions in some of the Romance languages. Comrie (1976: 112) explains, ‘Italian and Spanish have Progressives very similar in meaning to that of English: Italian *sto scrivendo*, Spanish *estoy escribiendo*, English *I am writing*. However, in Spanish and Italian these forms can always, without excluding progressive meaning, be replaced by the non-progressive forms *scrivo*, *escribo*, whereas in English changing *I am writing* to *I write* necessarily involves a shift to non-progressive meaning.’ Similarly in Italian, the Progressive and the Imperfect can be used in parallel (Comrie 1976: 112). However, while English might initially seem to be alone in having a progressive construction that is obligatory in certain contexts, it shares this position not only with Celtic, but also with two other Germanic languages, West Frisian and Icelandic (Thieroff 2000: 294). To these languages, Ebert (2000: 628-9) adds the Rhineland and Züritüütsch dialects of German to the

list as languages where the use of the progressive is approaching being obligatory. Therefore, the English no longer seems so unusual in having an obligatory progressive construction.

The periphrastic form of the English Progressive, formed with the copula and a gerund/participle, is not particularly atypical, either. According to Johanson (2000: 93), the use of a periphrastic construction to express imperfectivity, of which progressivity is a subcategory, is common. While the internal structure of the periphrastic construction may differ between languages, they share a pattern of taking a non-finite verb form – typically a nominal form – with a finite verb, usually a copula (Johanson 2000: 93). Johanson gives this examples of the copula with a non-finite verb form from Icelandic (2000: 94):

- (50) **er**                    **sofandi**  
      **be-3SG.PRES PART.PRES**  
      ‘is asleep’

(My gloss; Johanson’s translation)

In some languages, postural verbs, for instance ‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘lie’, can also be found as the auxiliary (Johanson 2000: 94). Indeed, Johanson derives the Italian *sta* and Portuguese *está* copulas from postural verbs, all derived from Latin *stare* ‘stand’ (2000: 94). Postural verbs are common as progressive auxiliaries in the Germanic languages (Johanson 2000: 96), although rarely used in Icelandic (Jóhannsdóttir 2011: 27). There is also a parallel here with English progressive marking. Ebert (2000: 624) points out that there are examples of postural verbs followed by *and* + V in Old, Middle and Modern English, for instance *stood and talked*. He says, ‘Earlier periods of English also had the constructions *sit V-ande*, *sit V-ing* and – with decreasing frequency – *sit to V*.’

Likewise, ‘movement’ verbs, for instance ‘come’ and ‘go’, can also be used to express progressive aspect as, for instance, in Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Portuguese (Johanson 2000: 94). Bertinetto, Evert and de Groot (2000: 522) give the following example of a movement verb used as the auxiliary from the Sardinian variety of Italian:

- (51) **va**    dimenticando  
      **goes** forget:GER  
      ‘He is forgetting (names).’

(Their gloss and translation)

The non-finite verb form within the periphrastic construction also shows variation among the languages of Europe. The non-finite form in Spanish, for instance, historically called the gerund (Cubí y Soler 1822: 323-4), is similar in form to the Italian non-finite lexical verb, as in Comrie’s (1976: 112) example:



- (52) *estoy escribiendo*  
 be-1SG.PRES **write-GER**  
 ‘I am writing’

(My gloss; Comrie’s translation)

The form of the gerund in Spanish, as in the Italian example at (51), is derived from the ablative case of the Latin gerund with the form *V-ndo* ‘in V-ing, by V-ing’. Other European languages, by contrast, have an infinitive as the non-finite form of the verb, as in Icelandic and Dutch. The Celtic languages, no longer having an infinitive or participle, use the verbal noun instead.

It is not just the periphrastic structure of the English Progressive that falls within the patterns of progressive structures in some other Indo-European languages. It also shows some similarity with the constructions formed with a ‘locative’ preposition governing the non-finite verb. Bertinetto, Evert and de Groot (2000: 532) state that European progressive constructions ‘include, in one way or another, a locative morpheme’. They list Breton, Danish, Dutch, Frisian, German, Icelandic, Italian, Portuguese and Züritüütsch as expressing progressive aspect by means of a copula and a prepositional phrase (Bertinetto, Ebert & De Groot 2000: 522). Comrie includes the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese postural verbs as having locative meaning (1976: 102). Boogaart (1991: 2) shows the parallel between the expressions of location (53) and of progressive aspect (54) in Dutch:

- (53) *hij is in de keuken*  
 he **is in** the kitchen  
 ‘he is in the kitchen’

- (54) *hij is aan het koken*  
 he **is at** the cook (inf)  
 ‘he is cooking’

(Boogaart’s glosses and translations)

The parallel between the constructions may not be exact, but they are similar in using the copula *be* with a preposition seen in some Middle English and some modern regional constructions. Comrie (1976: 103) explains the relationship between the progressive and the locative as being part of the common transposition between space and time expressions from the locative meaning of ‘being in a state’ to the progressive ‘being in the process’. As I discussed earlier in the chapter, the ungrammaticalised forms of the English Progressive from which the Modern English Progressive may derive has a locative preposition, too. Comrie says, ‘The Modern English expression *he is working* does not show any trace, synchronically, of being a locative construction, although there are overtly locative paraphrases, like *he is at work, at prayer*. However, in older stages of the English language one form of the Progressive was overtly locative, with a verbal noun preceded by a locative preposition, most

typically *at*, though also *in*, *on*, or the alternant *a'*, as in archaic and dialectal *Fred's been a-singing*' (1976: 98-9).

Johanson characterises the locative metaphor as 'inessive' or 'adessive' and gives the following example of a locative structure from Danish that, he says, parallels 'the older English construction *is at V-ing*' (2000: 94):

- (55)    *er*                    **ved at arbejde**  
         be-3SG.PRES **near to work**  
         'is working, is in the process of working'

The fact that the Germanic languages show a range of progressive constructions that are more or less similar to the English Progressive suggests that the ability to express progressivity by using one form of periphrasis or another was inherited by English before it left the Continent. This would explain the occasional examples of the copula and participle construction in Old English that have progressive sense, but, like in many other Germanic languages, are neither fully grammaticalised nor obligatory. Therefore, English is not as atypical as might be assumed on reading the standard version of the Celtic Hypothesis that Brythonic Celtic influenced the English Progressive. Instead, the English Progressive can be seen as an outlier, along with the Celtic languages, on a spectrum of progressive constructions, rather than as an anomaly that is matched only by the Celtic languages. A better version of the hypothesis might be that the English Progressive has its initial origins as an inherited Germanic structure, but that, if it was influenced by the Brythonic languages, this may have led to the English Progressive becoming fully grammaticalised to an extent that most Germanic languages are not. This Germanic underlay may explain why English did not take on the whole of the Brythonic aspectual system, if it was influenced by Brythonic at all. For these reasons, Mittendorf and Poppe's (2000: 120) statement that contact with Brythonic is not necessary as an explanation for the English Progressive appears sound.

### *The prepositional construction*

One feature that the West and North Germanic languages share with the Celtic languages is the use of a particle or a preposition in the progressive construction. In this respect, Dal's (1952) argument that the English Modern Progressive construction arose from the prepositional construction *be + on -ing* puts it both among the Germanic examples in structure and within the typologically common relationship between progressivity or imperfectivity and locativity. However, it also brings it closer to the relationship in Celtic between the progressive and the locative. As Hickey (2010: 19-20) explains, Celtic uses 'a locative expression for progressive aspect that is typologically parallel to Old English *ic wæs on huntunge*'. Mittendorf and Poppe (2000: 142) provide an example of the parallel construction in Middle Welsh:

- (56) **yn hela yd oedwn yn Iwerdon dydgueith**  
**PT hunt-VN PT be-1SG.IMPF** in Ireland one.day  
 ‘one day I was hunting in Ireland’

(*Branwen Uerch Lyr* (I. Williams 1930: 35))

This example shows the source of confusion over whether *yn* is an aspectual particle or a preposition. In contrast with the clearly locative function of *yn* in the prepositional phrase *yn Iwerdon* ‘in Ireland’, *yn* with the verbal noun *hela* is not so easy to categorise.

Discussing Modern Welsh, Awbery (1976: 17-8) and Stephen Williams (1980: 114) simply call *yn* a preposition. By contrast, Fife (1990: 308) gives the range of terms used for *yn* as aspect marker, participle marker or head of prepositional phrases. There is a good reason for distinguishing between these functions performed by *yn*: they are associated with different morphological contexts, which may indicate that originally distinct words have merged into the one form. Fife (1990: 310-2) notes that *yn* as an aspect marker can be enclitic and does not cause mutation, while as a preposition it is not usually enclitic and causes the nasal mutation. (Notice that *yn* also forms ‘predicate adjective and nominals’, where it causes soft mutation, and perhaps has a different derivation from the preposition *yn* (Fife 1990: 378).) Fife (1990: 315-7) draws a parallel between the general semantic linking of space and time with the congruence in Welsh between the aspect markers and prepositions, and rejects the term ‘aspect marker’ in favour of regarding them as ‘prepositions in extended semantic versions’ with ‘an imperfective locative’ relationship between the subject and *bod* (1990: 325). Ó Corráin (1997: 299) somewhat similarly calls the Insular Celtic aspectual system ‘a system of spatially based and periphrastic constructed aspectual distinctions’. It appears then that *yn* occurring before a verbal noun in conjunction with ‘be’ can, like several other prepositions, introduce a phrase having locative, participial or progressive sense.

The closest the English Progressive comes to the Brythonic progressive construction in terms of structure is obviously the early English prepositional construction *be + on/in/a -ing*, where progressivity is expressed by a locative prepositional aspect marker. The origin of the *-ing* component, being derived from a de-verbal noun, is also closer to the Brythonic verbal noun in being nominal and taking a genitive than the later verbalised gerund able to take an accusative is. From the point of view of function, the ability of the Brythonic languages to use the same prepositional aspect marker to introduce a participial phrase may be mirrored not only in function but also in structure by such English expression as Keats’ ‘On looking into Chapman’s Homer’.

If, on the other hand, the English Progressive takes its origin from the inherited participle in *-ende*, the differences between the early stage of the construction and the Brythonic progressive construction may be enough to rule out Brythonic influence. Although the participial function could be expressed in both languages, as specifically progressive constructions they differ in structure, morphology and semantics. The inherited participle was originally not associated with a preposition or aspect marker, it was rarely used with a progressive sense, and it was strictly adjectival.

As the early English participle and de-verbal noun merged semantically and formally, the progressive construction moved further from the Brythonic model in becoming more verbal than nominal and eventually losing the preposition *on/in/a* in the standard language. If there was any Brythonic influence in the origin of the English Progressive, the influence seems to have lost out to further developments in the English construction, as Dal (1952: 110-5) suggests.

## Section 6: Conclusion

Standard theories looking to explain the origin of the Modern English progressive construction have focused on the Old English construction *be* with the present active participle in *-ende* and the Old English de-verbal noun in *-ung(e)/-ing(e)* with a range of arguments explaining how these two possible sources interacted, if at all, in the development of the Middle English progressive construction *be + ing*. Mossé (1938a) mounts a detailed and persuasive argument that Old English *be + -ende* arose as a calque based on Latin syntax due to the glossators' need for word-for-word translations that then developed into a Latinate style primarily in religious texts. Whether this construction was the main or a contributing source for the Progressive, or even played no part in its rise, is subject to much dispute. So far, the arguments for the Modern English Progressive having developed from the Old English *be + -ende* construction have been unpersuasive.

The argument that the Progressive arose from the de-verbal noun in *-ung(e)/-ing(e)* is attractive because of its parallel structure and semantics with the Brythonic progressive construction, but it, too, is disputed. By and large, however, the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis take only the de-verbal noun with a preposition as the construction that led to the eventual Progressive. Dal's (1952) argument has merit, and proponents of the hypothesis have had little more to add to Dal's assessment of the origin of the Progressive.

If English is considered atypical in having developed a grammaticalised Progressive construction, then the Celtic Hypothesis presents a strong explanation for the motivation of the language change. If, however, both English and Celtic are viewed in the context of the Western European patterns of expressing progressivity or imperfectivity by means of a copula, postural verb or motion verb with a non-finite verb form introduced by a locative prepositional aspect marker, then it is unnecessary to adduce Brythonic influence, unless to suggest that the extent to which the English construction is grammaticalised is due to Brythonic influence. The fact that there are other Germanic languages with grammaticalised or nearly grammaticalised progressive constructions reduces the attractiveness of looking to Brythonic influence as an explanation for the origin and grammaticalisation of the English Progressive construction.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The language contact scenario between Brythonic and English in the first few centuries after the first large-scale migrations by the Anglo-Saxons and other West Germanic tribes is compatible with the Celtic Hypothesis of the linguistic imposition of Brythonic morphosyntactic and phonological features, as speakers of the Brythonic language quickly acquired the English language in large numbers. Such imposition is most likely to have occurred in the South East of England and the coastal regions of the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlements. Wessex was one of the early regions where there is evidence of people of Celtic and Germanic descent living within the same region, even if not with the same legal and social status. Because of the access people in Wessex had with Brythonic speakers across the borders to the north and south west and because of the long-term access Brythonic speakers in Wessex had to English speakers, a high level of bilingualism was more likely to have been achieved in Wessex than in areas in which most or all of the Brythonic-speaking communities shifted to English and abandoned the Brythonic language. The more bilingualism is successfully achieved, the less likely it is for linguistic features to be imposed on the target language. For this reason, the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis would do well to focus more attention on those regions of England where large-scale and sudden language shift to English and the probable eventual death of the Brythonic language occurred, a situation likely to lead to the imperfect acquisition of English with greater imposition of Brythonic linguistic features.

It is likely that there was wide-spread diglossia of various kinds throughout the regions controlled by the Anglo-Saxons. In some regions, both English and Brythonic may have been spoken with little bilingualism or with bilingualism only on the part of the Brythonic-speaking communities. In these regions and in other, predominantly English-speaking regions, it is likely that varieties of English that showed influence from Brythonic would have been considered inferior to the varieties that were perceived as having retained the original Germanic linguistic features. Proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis have provided a persuasive explanation for the paucity of evidence in Old English texts that could be claimed to show Brythonic influence. According to this argument, evidence of Brythonic influence is not to be expected until the conservative West Saxon standard of writing was relaxed when the English language ceased to be socially and politically dominant after the arrival of the Normans in Britain. The linguistic features that could be considered to be due to Brythonic influence are to be expected in less conservative and less formal texts written in Middle English.

Unfortunately for the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis, this argument significantly reduces the likelihood of the Old English dual paradigm of *be* having arisen due to Brythonic influence. Not even Brythonic influence in encouraging the retention of the dual paradigm can be considered likely, given that it was not retained after the period of conservative Old English writings. Although Old English was unusual in having a dual paradigm, the fact that the West Germanic languages were beginning to incorporate similar forms based on different

roots into the copula system through suppletion may help to explain the English situation. Since the copula is suppletive in several Indo-European languages, including other Germanic languages, it is possible that tendency towards suppletion may have encouraged, or at least may not have hindered, the creation of the dual paradigm. The parallel in form and function with the Brythonic dual paradigm is not surprising, given their shared inheritance of the forms and the semantics of the various roots within the paradigms from Proto-Indo-European. It is also possible that the parallel between the English and Brythonic paradigms was increased because of influence on the West Germanic languages from Continental Celtic. The specific forms in the Northumbrian dual paradigm that are not shared by the other main regional dialects may have been influenced by Brythonic speakers in that region. However, this is not evidence that such influence in Northumbria led to or encouraged the dual paradigm as a whole, particularly considering that the dual paradigm in the Northumbrian dialect appears to be less firmly established than in the West Saxon dialect. The Old English dual paradigm is, therefore, very unlikely to have been influenced by Brythonic.

The periphrastic *do*-construction that arose in the South of England in the Middle English period may have arisen due to Brythonic influence or more generally due to the language contact situation. However, language contact with Brythonic speakers is not the only possible explanation for this English construction. The English language was becoming more analytic during this period, not least because of the increasing use of modal verbs, a feature Middle English shared with other West Germanic languages. Moreover, there are sporadic uses of periphrastic ‘do’-constructions in other West Germanic regional dialects. Indeed, several non-Germanic, western European languages were similarly developing verbal systems in which auxiliaries played an important part. While the Brythonic languages appear to have been slightly ahead of early English in becoming more analytic, influence from Brythonic is not a necessary cause of the English development. The Brythonic construction with ‘do’ as an auxiliary and a verbal noun must have been present in the spoken language, since it occurs in written texts of all the Insular Celtic languages we have evidence for and it continues to be used in speech and writing in the modern stage of the surviving languages. Unfortunately, it is not possible to deduce from the early written texts whether the spoken Brythonic languages used their periphrastic constructions systematically and what the word order within the construction may have been. The Middle Welsh evidence, for instance, shows that the periphrastic construction with *gwneuthur* and a verbal noun was mostly structured in the abnormal word order with the verbal noun before the inflected auxiliary. If this is representative of the spoken language, it is hard to see how it could have been imposed onto English with the auxiliary before the infinitive. Even more problematic is the fact that the construction appears not to have been used in early verse or, indeed, early prose apart from the narrative tales of the *Mabinogion* group. So when proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis bring forward a few examples of Middle Welsh *gwneuthur* and verbal noun to support their argument, this shows only that the construction did exist in Middle Welsh, not that their examples are representative of the evidence as a whole. The use of Modern Welsh examples is even more problematic as support for the Celtic Hypothesis, because there are certain differences from the earlier usage as far as that can be determined from the Middle Welsh texts. The studies into the Celtic Englishes may add indirect insights to the way Celtic

languages and English can interact. However, it may also lead to mistaken conclusions about the earliest language changes in English that may have occurred due to Brythonic influence, for the simple reason that the contact scenarios and the means of the acquisition of English are immeasurably different in the modern context from what they were in the earliest period of contact starting in the fifth century.

The progressive construction that developed in Middle English shares some of the same linguistic context as *do*-periphrasis: the progressive, too, rose as a periphrastic construction during the period in which the use of auxiliaries was expanding across western Europe; and other Germanic languages were developing progressive constructions that parallel the English one in structure and function, some using ‘be’ as the auxiliary and others using verbs of motion or posture. It is possible that contact with Brythonic influenced the incorporation of the progressive construction into the English verbal system and it may explain why English can express aspectual contrast morphologically in the present, in contrast with some other European languages that can only do so in the past. If this influence did occur, it is most likely that it led to the prepositional construction in Middle English, since the Brythonic constructions all have a pre-verbal aspectual particle or a preposition – semantically, this may indicate a locative sense in aspect and place – and so they most closely parallel English *be* + *on/in/a* + *-ing*. There is, however, a fundamental problem with line of argument: the prepositional construction is a West Germanic feature and it can be found in Old English texts in its originally nominal form as well as in Middle and Modern West Germanic regional dialects. Furthermore, the use of a locative construction to express progressivity is typologically common. While it cannot be ruled out that the English progressive construction may have been influenced by Brythonic, and there a clear parallel between the English prepositional construction and the Brythonic progressive constructions, the Celtic Hypothesis for this construction is not a strong contender.

The Celtic Hypothesis offers valuable insights into possible linguistic outcomes of the contact between the Brythonic and English speakers within Britain. With better consideration of the theories of language change due to language contact and better awareness of the problematic nature of the Brythonic evidence, the proponents of the Celtic Hypothesis may be able to fine-tune their arguments for *do*-periphrasis and the progressive construction. For the English dual paradigm, however, Brythonic influence is not a feasible argument.

## Appendix 1 on Brythonic texts and manuscripts

### *Early Welsh texts*

The few extant writings in Primitive Welsh (550–800) contain little useful syntactical material, apart from evidence of phonological changes and the loss of endings. For the same reasons, texts in Old Welsh (800–1100) usually contain little of value for syntactic analysis, because of their brevity; they are mostly names or glosses in Latin texts (Russell 1995: 112–3). One text of interest is the *Surexit Memorandum*, which is several sentences in length, enough to show two types of word order (Fife & Poppe 1991: 50). The longest text, at twenty-three lines, is the *Computus* fragment (Russell 1995: 112).

The dividing line between the Old Welsh and Middle Welsh evidence is not hard and fast. It is argued that traces of Old Welsh linguistic features can be found in the Middle Welsh manuscripts, notably by Jackson (1953, 1969) and Koch (1997). Jackson (1953: 692–93) cites Morris-Jones (1918) to argue that the poems ascribed to Taliesin and Aneirin could have been composed in the second half and end of the sixth century, and his opinion is supported by Ifor Williams (1944). Similarly, Lewis (1992: 32–3) explains that *The Book of Taliesin*, transcribed in a Middle Welsh manuscript around 1275, contains some parts that may date back to the 600s, and that the *Book of Aneirin*, transcribed around 1250, has parts that date to the ninth or tenth century. If these scholars are correct, the composition of these poems, or parts of them at least, could predate Primitive Welsh. Ellis, indeed, suggests that these poems were written in the common Brythonic Celtic, rather than being Welsh or Scottish texts (P. B. Ellis 1974: 20). However, with such vague dating of the poems, this argument is hard to prove. The advantage of these works being poetry is that they can retain more archaic linguistic features, since metre, alliteration, assonance and rhyme help to preserve the original text or allow it to be recovered (Koch 1997: cxxxi–cxliii). However, this has to be weighed against the fact that they are correspondingly more likely to contain scribal errors than prose texts, since the copyist may be unfamiliar with the older stage of the language.

Since it is possible that some of these texts contain linguistic or historical material earlier than the date of the manuscripts, care has to be taken to distinguish between the date of the manuscript and the date of composition. If there are several manuscript copies of the same original text, there can be significant differences between them even if the copies are all dated at roughly the same time, since different copyists respond differently to the original text. For instance, some tend to be faithful to the original's orthography and language, while others may tend to modernise the orthography and language, and yet others may be inattentive or have difficulty understanding some of the material they are copying and so make errors. For instance, Koch notes that in the extant, Middle Welsh manuscript of *Y Gododdin* Scribe B kept to the Old Welsh or Cumbric spelling of the manuscript he was copying for the last seventeen of the forty-two stanzas (1997: xi). For these reasons, some manuscripts may be of more value than others. Even within one manuscript, a copyist may vary his style of copying,



or there may even be more than one copyist, shown by differences in style and handwriting. Something to consider is that a copyist may change his style as he works through a text, for instance by making less effort to modernise the further he goes. If the text is a translation from another language, the style may change as the translator becomes more familiar with the language of the original.

### *The manuscripts*

The main collections of Middle Welsh texts are the *Red Book of Hergest*, the *Black Book of Carmarthen* and the *White Book of Rhydderch*.

*Y Gododdin*, the elegiac poem securely attributed to Aneirin, is contained in one medieval manuscript (Cardiff 1), held in the Central Library in Cardiff, dating to around 1250 and written in two hands (A and B) (Jackson 1969: 3, 41-2, Jarman 1988: xiii-xiv). The edition of Sir Ifor Williams (1938) was the first, and so far the best, authoritative edition, although already there were good diplomatic editions before then. Jackson considers it to be written in the Cumbric language, which would have been very similar to the Welsh of the time (1969: ix). In contrast with Jackson, Jarman believes it to have been composed in Old or Early Middle Welsh (1988: ix). Jackson argues that the heroes in the poem are mostly from Scotland (1969: ix), and that it was in the Cumbric-speaking areas, centred around Strathclyde, that most of the post-Roman 'heroic' lifestyle would have continued (Jackson 1969: 64-6). From Strathclyde, one of the two versions of the poem would have been brought down to Wales in the ninth century (Jackson 1969: 64-6, cf. Jarman 1988: lxx-lxxv). The locations at Edinburgh and Catraeth (Catterick in Yorkshire), the tribe of the Gododdin (the Wotadini of the Romano-British period) and some of the characters can be linked to historically verifiable places and people (Jackson 1969: 4-8, 18-22). Following Williams, Jackson discusses at length the reasons for setting the date of the battle at Catraeth between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons at around 600 CE on the basis of the historical records available (Jackson 1969: 8-12, I. Williams 1938: xl-xlii). The date of the original, oral composition of the poem is a separate issue. Aneirin is referred to as the poet of the *Gododdin* in the poem itself and independently in Nennius's early-ninth century *Historia Brittonum* Chapter 62, where it is implied that Aneirin would have been alive at the time of the Battle of Catraeth (Jackson 1969: 22-5, Jarman 1988: xxiv-xxv, I. Williams 1938: lxxxv-xc). Williams has no doubt that Aneirin composed the poem around the time of the battle and that this was around 600, despite the manuscript's date of around 1250 (1961: xc). Jackson discusses the internal evidence for the date of the poem and agrees with Williams that the original version dates from just after the Battle of Catraeth, but he warns that there will have been a period of about a century or two in which there could have been 'corruptions' because of the oral nature of the transmission before the poem was first written down (1969: 43, 56-63, cf. Jarman 1988: xxviii, lxx).

The manuscript's two hands are clearly copied from two different earlier manuscripts. According to Jarman, hand A writes in Medieval orthography and hand B in Old Welsh

orthography (1988: xvi). Because of the spelling and the language, Williams demonstrates that the manuscript copied by hand B, although showing some attempts at modernising, must have been in Old Welsh, probably written in the ninth or the tenth centuries (I. Williams 1938: lxiii-lxvii). Jackson (1969: 42-3), Jarman (1988: lxviii-lxx) and Koch (1997: xi) agree with Williams that the orthography is that of, or similar to, Old Welsh. However, Jarman points out that the Old Welsh orthography could still have been used until around 1100, so it is not certain that the manuscript copied by hand B was so early (1988: xvi). Hand A, by contrast, was probably copying from a later manuscript that required less modernisation to bring it into his contemporary version, although there seem to be some archaic features that have not been understood (Jackson 1969: 43).

Because the *Gododdin* is not narrative, but panegyric and elegiac tributes to the fallen heroes (Jackson 1969: 38), it may not show the range of syntactic features found in other texts. Furthermore, the format of the poem relies on repetition of lines and phrases (Jackson 1969: 44-5, Jarman 1988: xxxviii-xl), and this could distort the frequencies of certain syntactic features. For instance, the word *aeth* (3 sg preterite of 'go') is frequently repeated. For these reasons, this poem has its limitations as a source for linguistic analysis. On the other hand, it may contain older features than other texts, partly because it appears to have been originally composed around the year 600, but more importantly because the formal structure of the poem aids in the conservation of the original archaic features. The structure of a stanza typically has the same number of syllables in each line (generally between nine and eleven), with the same end rhyme in each line, with internal rhyme within each line that could differ from the end rhyme, sometimes with 'half-rhymes' (where the final consonant is the same) or 'Irish rhymes' (where the vowels and diphthongs are the same), and sometimes with alliteration within a line (Jackson 1969: 54-5, Jarman 1988: lxxv-lxxix, I. Williams 1938: lxvii, lxx-lxxxv). This intensely rigid structure could obviate some of the common problems in manuscript traditions, such as the substitution of one word for another of similar meaning or the substitution of one grammatical form for another. For this reason, *Y Gododdin* may provide evidence of an older stage of the language than is available in the prose texts. Williams, for instance, discusses the absence of the definite article as one of the older linguistic features found in the poem (1938: lxviii-lxx).

Within *The Book of Taliesin* are a number of works, many of which cannot be considered to have been written by Taliesin himself, as Ifor Williams explains (1968: xv-xxiii). Of the various manuscripts, he says, the most important is Peniarth 2 held in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. He cites Gwenogvryn Evans (1899) as dating it around 1275 and Denholm-Young (1954) as dating it to the fourteenth century (1968: xiv-xv), although he notes that some features of the orthography date to the ninth and tenth centuries and some of the language and the style of the poems are archaic (I. Williams 1968: xxxiv). Williams identifies twelve poems that can securely be attributed to Taliesin and it is these that are contained in his edition (1968: xviii-xix, xxiii, lxv-lxvii). Taliesin can be identified as a historical figure and Williams discusses the external evidence that points to the second half of the sixth century for the composition of the poems (1968: ix-xiv, xxviii). Eight of these poems celebrate the exploits of Urien, the ruler of Rheged at the time, one is addressed to

Urien's son Owain, one is for Cynan Garwyn, a contemporary of Urien, and the rest are for one of Urien's allies, Gwallawg (I. Williams 1968: xxx, xxxvi-xxxviii, xlvii-lix). Like the poetic features of *Y Gododdin*, the poems by Taliesin include lines of between nine and twelve syllables, alliteration within lines and sometimes at the beginning of lines, and 'half-rhyme' or 'Irish rhyme', although end rhyme is less common than in Aneirin's poems (I. Williams 1968: lxiii-lxv).

*Armes Prydein* (*The Prophecy of Britain*) is also contained in *The Book of Taliesin*. On the basis of the context portrayed in the poem in relation to the historical context, Williams proposes the date of composition as 930, in other words, in the mid-Old Welsh period (1964: x-xx, 1968: xxvi). The poem shows alliteration, syllabic metre and the rhyming pattern with combinations of end rhyme, internal rhyme and 'Irish rhyme' (I. Williams 1964: xlii-xliv). In contrast with the poems of Taliesin and Aneirin about historical events, this poem prophesizes a future battle between the Welsh tribes and their allies against the Saxons, specifically those of Wessex. This poem is interesting from a linguistic point of view, because the verb tenses differ from other texts since it is set in the future.

The *Mabinogi* is contained in two manuscripts. Robert Thomson (1957: xi) dates the manuscripts to the last quarter of the thirteenth century for the *White Book of Rhydderch* (*Llyr Gwyn Rhydderch*), which is held in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, as Peniarth MSS. 4 and 5, and the first quarter of the fifteenth century for the *Red Book of Hergest* (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*), held in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford, as MS. cxi. However, according to Derick Thomson (1961: ix-x), who cites the palaeographical analysis of Gwenogvryn Evans, the *White Book* dates to about 1300–25 and the *Red Book* dates to about 1375–1425. They are followed in this by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (2000: xvii). There are also fragments of the stories in MSS. Peniarth 6, 7, 14 and 16, which are held in the National Library of Wales, some of which date to the early thirteenth century (G. Jones & Jones 2000: xvii). Derick Thomson cites Gwenogvryn Evans as giving the date of MS. Peniarth 6 as 1235 (1961: x). The *Red Book of Hergest* shows modernisation and regularisation of the orthography, syntax and lexis, while this is only partly attempted in the *White Book* (R. L. Thomson 1957: xi). In other respects, the texts are very similar and Robert Thomson holds that the *Red Book* may be a copy of the *White Book* 'or of a manuscript very similar to it' (1957: xi). He evaluates the evidence from orthography, and the pronunciation implicit in it, and argues that the date of the manuscript from which the *White* and *Red Books* are copied must be the eleventh century (1957: xii-xiv). The earliest story, *Culhwch ac Olwen*, may date from the second half of the tenth century on the basis of orthography, glosses, vocabulary and syntax (G. Jones & Jones 2000: xvii). Although these manuscripts are late, Jones and Jones explain that 'no one doubts that much of the subject matter of the stories is very old indeed' (2000: xvii). These, and similar stories, belonged to an oral tradition, and so they may have been retold for centuries before being written down (G. Jones & Jones 2000: xix, R. L. Thomson 1957: xx). The high-point of the bardic tradition, which included story-telling in prose as well as verse, was between the sixth and fifteenth centuries (G. Jones & Jones 2000: xix). The first of the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*, *Pwyll Pendewic Dyuet*, has its story supposedly in the pre-Roman period although the social customs reflect the heroic age

preceding the Norman Conquest (R. L. Thomson 1957: xiv-xv). The second Branch, *Branwen Uerch Lyr*, which also has a heroic background, shows influence from Irish sources and one of these may indicate that this story contains an incident dating no later than the tenth century, since that is the date of the two earliest Irish manuscripts that contain the same incident (D. S. Thomson 1961: xxxiv-xliv).

*Brut y Tywysogyon* in the most complete version is contained in the manuscripts of Peniarth MS. 20 in which the chronicle runs from the year 681 until 1282, with a later continuation until 1332 (T. Jones 1952: xi). As well as the copies in the *Red Book of Hergest* (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*), Jesus College, Oxford MS. cxi edited by Thomas Jones (1955), and *The Kings of the Saxons* (*Brenhinedd y Saesson*), BM Cotton Cleopatra MS. B v., there are roughly ten other manuscripts with sections of it (T. Jones 1952: xi-xii, xlv-lix). One important thing to note is that this text is a translation from Latin and it appears that Peniarth MS. 20 and the *Red Book of Hergest* contain different translations from Latin, and it seems that there were at least three different Latin versions from which the Welsh translations were made (T. Jones 1952: xxxvi-xxxvii). The fact that these versions of the text are translations from Latin complicates their use as evidence for the Middle Welsh language, since the grammar is not necessarily unaffected by Latin grammatical features.

#### *Early Cornish and Breton texts*

There is little of value for syntactic analysis written in Old Cornish (800 – 1200).<sup>31</sup> There are, however, substantial texts in Middle Cornish (13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), such as *Origo Mundi*, *Passio Christi* and *Resurrexio Domini*. The modern Anglo-Cornish dialect continues to show the interaction between early English and Brythonic Celtic.

The Middle Cornish *Ordinalia*, a collection of the three mystery plays *Origo Mundi*, *Passio Christi* and *Resurrexio Domini*, is contained in one manuscript, Bodley 791 in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and dates to the first half of the fifteenth century (Harris 1969: vii). Harris presents reasons for considering the original text to date to the third quarter of the fourteenth century, probably written by a cleric or clerics in Penryn to the south east of Falmouth (1969: viii-ix). It is an advantage that there is a short span of time between the original and the copy, since the copy is likely to represent the linguistic stage of the original, whatever other copying errors there may be. However, it is a disadvantage that the original text was probably so late. This means that this text can be used to confirm Brythonic usages shared with Welsh and Breton that are well attested there, but any independent linguistic features in Middle Cornish have to be used with care, since they may have been influenced by English. Fortunately, the date of the extant manuscript pre-dates the introduction of the English translation of the Bible and English services on the Cornish people, so the Middle Cornish of these plays may not be as badly affected by English as they might.

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<sup>31</sup> Lewis (1946: 1-5) provides a more detailed overview of the Cornish texts available.

The few manuscripts in Old Breton (5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), primarily glosses, cartularies and in Latin texts, date from the ninth century (Hemon 1975). Poetic texts in Middle Breton (12<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) include the *Dialogue between Arthur and Guynglaff*. There are also mystery plays, for instance *Buhez Sante Barba*.

## **Appendix 2 on the contact situation in Britain from the mid-fifth century**

Although the traditional accounts of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain are now mostly regarded as biased, a few modern scholars still hold to the idea of extermination or exile of the Celtic language speakers in Britain after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. Coates (2002: 47-85), for instance, argues that, although there were many Celtic place names in England, this does not indicate that the Britons stayed in the area after passing on the name of the place to the invading Anglo-Saxons. Any lasting imposition of Brythonic linguistic features on the English language would be ruled out if he is correct that the Britons were exterminated or exiled.

However, recent archaeological studies have indicated that this was not generally the case, or if it was the case, it was only in localised areas. Such archaeological evidence was presented early on by people such as Jackson (1954, 1963a), H.M. and N.K. Chadwick (1954), and N.K. Chadwick (1963b). More recently similar archaeological evidence, presented for instance by Brooks (1989), Hooke (1998) and Charles-Edwards (2013) confirms that not all the Britons were wiped out. Brooks argues that the fact that the Anglo-Saxons retained many of the existing structures, dwellings and sites of the Romanised Britons indicates that there was continuity of settlement after their arrival in Kent (1989: 57). Hooke (1998) discusses such continuity at Orton Hall in Cambridgeshire, Barton Court Farm in Oxfordshire, and Catholme in Staffordshire. She argues that the Anglo-Saxons and the Romano-British lived alongside each other in some places: 'The early Anglo-Saxon settlement of Mucking occupies a site on the barren northern shore of the Thames estuary as if this was the only land left available.' (Hooke 1998: 44). Chadwick argues that Romanised Britons would have remained even in East Anglia as serfs (1963a: 139), and Hooke agrees, saying: 'A change in the ruling power rarely involves the total destruction of a country's economic framework, whatever subsequent adjustments may be made, for the land must continue to produce sufficient food to maintain both its indigenous inhabitants and any newcomers. For the same reason few conquerors would entirely kill off the farmers and slaves who worked the land' (Hooke 1998: 63).

Indeed the high number of Brythonic place names in England is considered by Jackson (1954) to provide support for the view that at least some speakers of Brythonic Celtic had enough close contact with early English speakers to allow the information of the Celtic place names to be communicated. He analyses the proportion of British river names across England and uses it as evidence of the stages of Anglo-Saxon settlement (1954: 63-4). Since only large and some medium-sized rivers in the very east of England retain their British names, he argues that there was rapid settlement there by the Anglo-Saxons and that if the Britons remained in the area they would have become serfs; further west as far as the Pennines, more British river names, including those of smaller rivers, are retained, as well as names of villages and natural features, and this indicates that the Anglo-Saxons were spreading out

more gradually in this area; west of the Pennines and to the north- and south-west areas, the proportion of British names of rivers, villages and natural features are higher still, indicating that the Anglo-Saxons settled these areas in smaller numbers than they had east of the Pennines (Jackson 1954: 63-4). Coates (2002: 47-85) is clearly in a minority in arguing that the retention of many British place names in England is compatible with the idea that the Britons were mostly exiled or exterminated. By contrast, Jackson's works are still referred to as evidence that a large proportion of Britons remained in England. Charles-Edwards, for instance, cites Jackson several times, even if he disagrees with some of his interpretations (2013: 92-4).

Furthermore, Higham (2002: 42) argues that we should focus away from the idea of mass immigration; there is more likely to have been a gradual influx of Anglo-Saxons into Britain. Chadwick (1963a: 138-9) explains that some Anglo-Saxons would have come to Britain as mercenaries of the Romano-British from around 390–400 CE and would have been allotted settlement sites in East Anglia, living and working among the Celtic population. Blair (1970: 27) presents a similar account of the 'slow piece-meal process' of Anglo-Saxon settlement, and he argues that the presence of pagan Saxon burial sites near Romano-British towns is evidence of their peaceful co-existence with the original inhabitants. Similarly, Hooke (1998: 44) finds evidence of British and Anglo-Saxon grave goods in the same burial sites at Frilford, in the Upper Thames Valley, at Bishops Cleeve, Gloucestershire, and other cemeteries in the Midland region.

Military control is not the same as settlement and, as Charles-Edwards says, 'acquisition of political control is not the same things [*sic*] as a change of population or of language' (2013: 93). The English gained military control of the lowlands east of a line from York to Salisbury in the 440s, territory which was gradually settled by the end of the fifth century, but there would still have been British enclaves, for instance, in the Chilterns (Charles-Edwards 2013: 51). The territory of the English-speaking Hwicce, for instance, would have contained a 'considerable' population of Brythonic-speaking Britons at least into the seventh century (Charles-Edwards 2013: 93). In the South West of England the English incursions began around the mid-fifth century, but until the end of the sixth century it was a pattern of conquest and defeat without settlement, with Devon being settled in the eighth century and Cornwall being gained in the ninth century, although even then the Cornish did not become anglicised the way people of Devon did (Charles-Edwards 2013: 22). Even in Dorset, there were still pockets of Britons among the English until the end of the seventh century (Charles-Edwards 2013: 189). To the north, in Northumbria, the proportion of the Brythonic-speaking population to the English settlers was 'considerable' and greater than it was in southern England until the mid-seventh century, when 'assimilation of British communities to a dominant English culture and language is likely to have become much more rapid' (Charles-Edwards 2013: 402-4, 9). Within the Mercian and Northumbrian borders with the British-held lands, there would also have been intermarriage between the English and Britons at all levels of society until the mid-seventh century (Charles-Edwards 2013: 423-4).

Recent genetic studies generally confirm the evidence of the archaeology. One detailed genetic studies shows, firstly, that there is a gradual change in proportion between the Celtic and Germanic (male) y-chromosomes across England and into Wales, indicating that there was a more gradual displacement or less slaughter of the Celtic men than had been supposed; secondly, that Celtic (female) mitochondrial DNA was retained throughout the country, which indicates that the Celtic women were neither killed nor displaced (McKie 2006, Sykes 2006). Sykes estimates that the Saxon or Danish genes are 10% in south England, 15% in the Danelaw and 20% in East Anglia (2006: 286). These proportions are not, however, unanimously accepted. In another study Weale et al. (2002: 1017), using a smaller sample of y-chromosomes from across the centre of Britain in an east-west line, conclude that there is evidence of a more intensive influx of Anglo-Saxon men. They conclude that their data indicates a mass immigration into central England that affected between 50% and 100% of the male population (Weale, et al. 2002: 1018). However, they admit that they are not able to say whether these immigrants simply added to the Celtic population, displaced them or reduced their numbers, nor whether the immigration occurred at one time or over several generations (Weale, et al. 2002: 1018).

Pattison (2008: 2423) addresses the conclusions of Weale et al. (2002) and says that there are problems with assuming that ‘significant northwest European migration’ occurred only at the start of the Anglo-Saxon period. He explains that Germanic genes would have been introduced to the south of England during the migrations over the last two centuries BCE of a large number of the (nominally Celtic) Belgae tribe, who inhabited an area that now includes northern France and Belgium, since this tribe was a mixture of neighbouring Celtic and Germanic tribes (Pattison 2008: 2424, 2011: 720-2). Pattison further suggests that the use of Germanic mercenaries by the Romans also gradually contributed to the Germanic gene pool within England from the time of the Roman invasion in 43 CE, which included around 10,000 Germanic soldiers, and he argues that immigration would have continued for several centuries as the Germanic soldiers took over more and more of the military duties within Roman Britain (Pattison 2008: 2424-5). In fact, one of the cohorts, the *cohors VI Nerviorum*, was recruited from Belgic Gaul (Pattison 2011: 723). Furthermore, he says, the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons were not ‘two clearly different, homogenous groups’ and there would have been much interbreeding or even intermarriage (Pattison 2008: 2424-5). His central argument is that there is no evidence of an apartheid social structure.

Pattison takes the continuation of the Romano-British and sometimes even pre-Roman political geography, for instance boundary lines, as being compatible with his genetic findings in showing that the Britons continued to live in England (2011: 724-5). As for the number of Anglo-Saxons participating in the immigration into England, Pattison finds that the average ‘arrival rate’ for this period was approximately 580 immigrants each year and on average added 6.2% of the population, giving a total of approximately 175,000 immigrants for the whole period of about 300 years in contrast with the total of approximately 2,600,000 existing inhabitants (2008: 2427-8). He considers these figures to fall ‘within the range now commonly assumed for the elite replacement theory’ (Pattison 2008: 2428). This lower estimate is supported by a recent study of whole-genome sequences of ten individuals in the



east of England by Schiffels, Haak, Paajanen and others using rare allele sharing, which shows that an average of only 38% of the contemporary population of East Anglia and about 37% in Kent would have Anglo-Saxon ancestry and that throughout England it probably ranged from 10% to 40% (Schiffels 2016).

With this archaeological and genetic evidence that the Britons were not all exterminated or exiled, the societal change from a specifically British group identity in the lowlands would have been through negotiation and acculturation (Higham 2002: 43). There were different motivations for becoming acculturated to the Anglo-Saxon culture and language, and there could be significant advantages to integration. On the one hand, the high-status Britons in the uplands seem to have had a vested interest in keeping the British values and identity alive (Higham 2002: 41-2). On the other, Grimmer (2007) considers that the two-tiered Law of Ine for the wergild for Anglo-Saxons distinct from that for Britons indicates an incentive for the Britons to become integrated into Anglo-Saxon society. Pattison (2008: 2426) sees a similar incentive and explains that the laws of Ine were codified in the period just after the West Saxons had overrun Devon and southern Somerset in the late seventh century. He mentions evidence of intermarriage between Britons and Anglo-Saxons within Wessex (Pattison 2008: 2426). For those Britons who were pagan or for those whose Christian faith was not strong, the adoption of the Anglo-Saxon life-style would have been easy and may have seemed advantageous, since being British was 'equated with a whole package of social and economic disadvantages' (Higham 2002: 40-1). Some of the Christian Britons, too, may have valued the advantages of being acculturated (Higham 2002: 40). Pattison (2011: 725-6) points out that belonging to Anglo-Saxon society was not a matter of ancestry or genetic origin, but of social and cultural identification.

Integration would not have been equally effective throughout England, since the relationship between the British kingdoms and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms depended only on the kingdoms involved. For instance, although there was recurrent hostility between the Welsh and the Mercians between periods of cooperation, the West Saxons were seen as protectors of the Welsh, and Edward the Elder, King of the Anglo-Saxons, paid the ransom for a Welsh bishop captured by Scandinavian raiders in 914 CE (Wainwright 1959: 66). Proximity could also play a part. For instance, the British king Geraint and the bishops of Dumnonia, being closer to Wessex-held territory, were perceived as more likely to acquiesce to a request by Aldhelm, the seventh century English abbot of Malmesbury in Wessex, than the British clergy further away in the British kingdom of Dyfed (Higham 2002: 35-6).

As these examples suggest, religion was one of the avenues through which there was contact between the British and the Anglo-Saxons. Even though the Anglo-Saxons were pagan when they arrived in England, there is evidence of their religious tolerance of British Christianity, including tolerance of communities of Christian Britons living among them in some regions (Blair 1970: 74-582, 112-3, Higham 2002: 37-8). Furthermore, Celtic missionaries, often from Ireland, and the British clergy were allowed to travel and preach throughout England (Higham 2002: 38). With this tolerance of Celtic Christians living and travelling within at least some of the English-held territory, the Brythonic languages may have been spoken in

these regions for longer than in other regions of England. For instance, there was a large community of Britons at St Albans in the Chiltern area that was not subsumed by Mercia until the sixth or seventh century (Bailey 1989: 110-1, Hooke 1998: 142).

Religion was not, however, the only, or even the main, avenue for contact between Britons and Anglo-Saxons. In both Anglo-Saxon and British societies, marriages between high-ranking families of different kingdoms were arranged in order to form political alliances, and the interests of high-ranking families appear to have transcended national and cultural boundaries, for instance, between the Celtic kingdom of Rheged and English Northumbria (N. K. Chadwick 1963d: 158-9, 64, Jackson 1963b: 41). Likewise Eanfrith of Bernicia, the son of Æthelfrith, married a high-ranking Pictish woman, while his daughter married a king of Strathclyde, a British kingdom (N. K. Chadwick 1963a: 145). Ine, king of Wessex, claimed Cerdic, a British king, as an ancestor (Pattison 2008: 2426). In the mid-western Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, too, there were men of high rank of British descent (Hooke 1998: 40-3). Evidence of Brythonic names within high-ranking Anglo-Saxon families further indicates that there may have been frequent inter-cultural marriages, or at the very least that inter-cultural relations were on a friendly enough basis for Brythonic names to have been found acceptable in Anglo-Saxon society (Dumville 1989: 128, Higham 2002: 38). Bassett suggests that large-scale intermarriage would have occurred between the British and the Anglo-Saxons (1989: 21), or at least intercultural partnerships whether or not marriage was involved (Jackson 1963a: 73, Pattison 2008: 2424). Indeed, there seems to have been a recurrent problem of Anglo-Saxon masters having personal relationships with their female slaves, as is implied by Ælfric's *Sermon on the Auguries* and a law of Cnut (Lutz 2009: 242-3).

Although it is clear from the laws of Ine that not all Britons in the Anglo-Saxon areas were made slaves, there is strong linguistic evidence to suggest that many were, particularly the women. Hickey (2012: 498) concludes that there must have been regular contact between Anglo-Saxons and subjugated Celts because of the semantic extension of the Old English words *wealh* (masculine) and *wielen/wiln* (feminine) from the basic meaning 'foreigner' to also include 'Celt' and 'servant/slave', with the meaning 'servant/slave' predominating in West Saxon. Lutz (2009: 239-44) provides an analysis of two Old English terms for females slave, *wīln* and *wēale*, both of which are the feminine form of *wealh*. She contrasts the dates at which these two terms are used with their slightly different meanings. Because *wīln* has undergone early i-mutation, it is earlier than *wēale*, which has not, and because *wīln* means 'female slave' but not specifically a Celtic one, whereas *wēale* is restricted to 'Celtic female slave', this is evidence that slave women were predominantly British in the south of England in the first few centuries after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, but thereafter the proportion of British women among the slave population was lower and a separate term was used to distinguish them from the other female slaves (Lutz 2009: 241-2). It is important to bear in mind, however, that not all Celts were enslaved. For example, research by Schiffels and others indicates that a wealthy Celtic woman was interred in about 500 CE alongside Anglo-Saxons and people of genetically mixed ancestry in the well-studied culturally Anglo-Saxon village of Oakington just outside Cambridge in the East of England (2016: 7). They point out

that the combined genetic and archaeological evidence suggests that the new Anglo-Saxons immigrants tended to be poorer than the native British population (2016: 7).

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